ONDER TALES
OM THE GREEK
ROMAN MYTHS

GLADYS DAVIDSON

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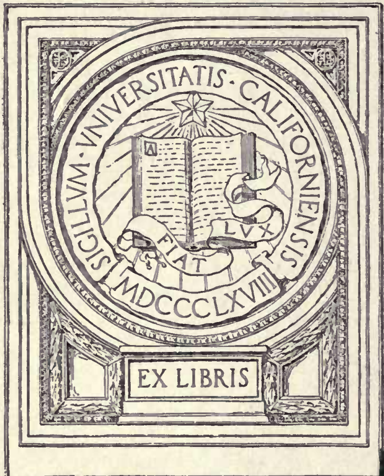
LOS ANGELES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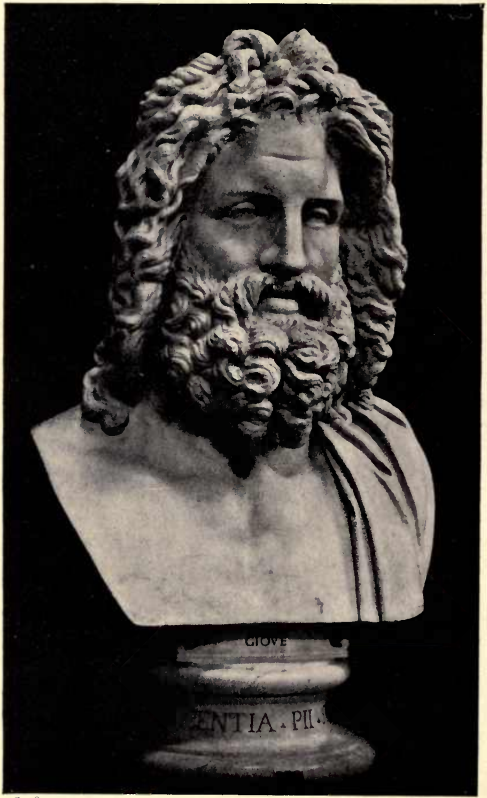
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ZEUS

From the bust in the Vatican Museum, Rome

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WONDER TALES FROM THE GREEK & ROMAN MYTHS

BY

GLADYS DAVIDSON

Author of "Stories from the Operas" "Overheard at the Zoo" &c.

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Printed in Great Britain by Blackie & Son, Ltd., Glasgow

PZ 8.1
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CONTENTS

Page
INTRODUCTION 9
PANDORA'S BOX 14
THE STORY OF PROSERPINA 28
PHILEMON AND BAUCIS 44
EUROPA AND CADMUS 53
ORPHEUS AND HIS LYRE 61
THE STORY OF PHRIXUS AND HELLE 68
HOW JASON TOOK THE GOLDEN FLEECE 71
PERSEUS THE GORGON SLAYER 87
THE STORY OF THESEUS AND ARIADNE 98
BELLEROPHON AND PEGASUS, THE WINGED HORSE . . 109
FAIR HELEN AND THE SIEGE OF TROY 116
THE WANDERINGS OF ULYSSES 132
THE WANDERINGS OF ÆNEAS 156
THE STORY OF ECHO AND NARCISSUS. 171
ATALANTA'S RACE 178
THE LABOURS OF HERCULES. 189
THE STORY OF ALCESTIS 204
THE STORY OF CUPID AND PSYCHE 209
PYRAMUS AND THISBE 215
MIDAS AND THE MAGIC GOLD 220
THE MYTHS OF THE FLUTE AND THE PANDEAN PIPES . 228
DAMON AND PYTHIAS 239
THE SWORD OF DAMOCLES 244

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LIST OF PLATES

Page

ZEUS . . . . *Frontispiece*

CERES 32

MERCURY ASTONISHES PHILEMON AND BAUCIS . . . 48

ORPHEUS WITH THE ARGONAUTS 65

MEDEA GIVES THE MAGIC POWDER TO THE DRAGON . . 80

THESEUS FIGHTS THE MINOTAUR 104

PARIS 128

CIRCE ATTEMPTS TO ENCHANT ULYSSES 144

PENELOPE 152

NARCISSUS FALLS IN LOVE WITH HIS OWN IMAGE . . 177

ATALANTA STOPS FOR THE THIRD GOLDEN APPLE . . 192

MINERVA 196

APOLLO 205

KING MIDAS SPRINKLES THE GOLDEN PLANTS WITH THE MAGIC WATER 224

PAN 232

DIONYSIUS AND ACTORS 240

Wonder Tales from the Greek and Roman Myths

Introduction

The religion of the early Greeks and Romans, like that of most of the ancient nations of their time, was very closely interwoven with the history of their country and the deeds of their most famous heroes; and though, before the introduction of Christianity, it had fallen into a very corrupt state, in its earlier and purer forms it had much that was beautiful in it, and many great truths were hidden in the myths and fables relating to the various gods and goddesses worshipped by its adherents.

What we may regard as the foolish pagan practice of worshipping many different gods and goddesses may not have been so entirely foolish from the standpoint of primitive peoples. Those who have made special study of such matters give various explanations as to how the practice may have arisen. The foremost nations of ancient times all had a belief in the existence of gods and goddesses—the Babylonians, Assyrians, Egyptians, as well as the Greeks and Romans and the people of ancient India. Naturally, such gods and goddesses are regarded as having each different powers and a different character, and some of them may be looked upon as far more powerful and benevolent than others. Writers tell us that among the Greeks, as among the other ancient peoples, many people were fully convinced that there was one great and splendid God, who was mightier and far above all the others, who were inferior to himself in power and over whom he ruled as a glorious king. This king, or father of the gods, was called by the Greeks Zeus, and by the Romans Jupiter, being familiar to us also by the name Jove.

The more enlightened of the Greeks felt that this mighty God, the lord of the whole universe, must be possessed of every great and good quality they most admired; and since they so highly reverenced these qualities and virtues in him, and he was the head of all, they often spoke as if he were the one and only deity.

Among the other great deities or gods, was Minerva—called Pallas Athēnē by the Greeks—the Goddess of Wisdom. Two deities strong and mighty in battle were Mars—called Ares by the Greeks—the God of War, and Bellona, his sister, Goddess of Battles. They also worshipped beauty, itself—called Aphrodītē by the Greeks, Venus by the Romans—the Goddess of

Beauty. Another famous deity was Mercury—called Hermes by the Greeks—the God of cunning, liveliness, and commercial ability. Artistic gifts, again, were represented by Apollo, the God of Music and the Arts, while Cupid—called Eros by the Greeks—was the God of Love.

The marvels of the world of nature were treated and worshipped as deities also—the sun as Apollo, or Phœbus, the sun-god; the moon as the goddess Luna; fire as the god Vulcan; the corn as Ceres; the flowers as Flora; the fruits as Pomona, &c.

Possibly wise men and teachers may have invented some of these gods with the desire that mankind should not forget to render due worship to the powers and goodness of the One Great God and All-Father, nor to be thankful for the wonders He had made and His care for their welfare; and some myths in which these gods and goddesses figure are probably intended, if read aright, to be taken as parables or allegories setting forth some great truth or moral lesson.

Several of these myths and stories are very similar to certain of the stories contained in our Bible and in the great books of other ancient religions; and this is the reason why some students have thought that all religions can be traced to one origin.

However that may be, though the comparison of these myths with the Bible narratives is very interesting and fascinating, I do not propose to go into the subject in this book, but merely to tell you some of the wonderful stories contained in the Greek and Roman fables, so that you may be encouraged to take up the study of these myths and their hidden meanings for yourselves later on.

Most of our knowledge of these myths has been gathered from the beautiful poetry of the ancient Greeks and Romans, and from the wonderful plays written by their greatest writers.

From these authors we learn that the chief home of the gods was believed to be Mount Olympus, a range of high mountains on the boundary of Macedonia and Thessaly; and here the mighty Jupiter reigned as king of the heavens, with his queen, Juno, the glorious Goddess of Marriage, and attended by a court of other gods and goddesses.

The seas were ruled by Neptune, the King-God of the Ocean; and the Under-World, or Land of Shades, where the ancients believed that the spirits of men and women dwelt after death, was ruled by the dreaded god Pluto, the King of Darkness.

All these ruling gods were attended by lesser gods; and they did not always remain in their own abodes, but spent much of their time in visiting the earth, where they often made use of mortals, giants, dwarfs, and even wild beasts in order to carry out their plans.

They were all gifted with magic powers, and some of them could take on the form of any creature they pleased; and though they were often glorious to look upon, they were not always kind or virtuous, and in many of the stories told of them by the ancient writers they are represented as doing cruel deeds.

There are also mentioned in these tales other beings known as nymphs, who were, in reality, lesser goddesses, but who, though of a higher order than ordinary mortal maidens, did not possess the magic powers of the great goddesses; and these fairy-like creatures dwelt in the seas, springs, rivers, grottoes, trees, and mountains. The sea-nymphs were called Oceanides and Nereids; those who dwelt in fresh water, rivers, lakes, brooks, or springs were known as Naiads; the nymphs of the mountains and grottoes were the Oreades; the nymphs of the glens were Napææ; the nymphs of the trees were called Dryads—those who dwelt in oak trees only being known as Hamadryads.

The nymphs were very fair to look upon; and many of them were married to mortals, and some of them to gods.

Besides the nymphs, there were some strange male beings called Satyrs. These were lesser gods of the woods, and were ugly creatures, more like apes than men, but with the cloven feet and horns of goats; and they were wild and noisy in their ways and took great delight in frightening the nymphs and any mortal maidens who came near them.

Many of the stories told of the gods and heroes of the ancient Greeks and Romans are full of wonder and beauty; and in this book I have related some of the most interesting of these tales, in the hope that you may be led thus to read them later on in their original form in the beautiful poetry of these two great nations of the past—whose scholars, poets, dramatists, philosophers, mathematicians and sculptors are numbered amongst the greatest the world has ever known.

Pandora's Box

The great gods of the ancient Greeks were exceedingly jealous of their magic gifts and mighty powers; and they took great precautions to prevent any of the lesser gods or, later on, mortals from robbing them of part of their glory, or even learning a little of the wonderful knowledge they possessed and which they wished to keep for themselves alone, fearing lest, otherwise, they could not hope to rule the world.

The beings they feared most were the Titans, a family of mighty giants, the six sons and six daughters of Uranus (Heaven) and Gæa (Earth), who entered into a long struggle with Jupiter for the sovereignty of the heavens, but who were at last overcome by the great god, who thrust them down into the lowest part of the under-world—known as Tartarus, the place of punishment—where they could no longer harm him.

Some of the sons of the Titans, however, still tried to seize a part of the power and knowledge of the gods, though they had not the wonderful stature and strength of their mighty parents; and the most famous of these was Prometheus, who was afterwards regarded as a great benefactor of mankind, for whom he performed numerous good deeds.

Seeing that Prometheus was endeavouring to teach the mortals on earth, who, at that time, were very ignorant and helpless, Minerva, the beautiful goddess of wisdom and learning, surprised and full of admiration for his clever handiwork and kindness to mankind, offered to bring him anything he desired from the heavens in order to help him with his good work.

Prometheus cunningly answered that, never having been in the heavens, he did not know what to ask for; and then, as he had hoped, Minerva agreed to take him there for a short spell, that he might behold its glories for himself.

When Prometheus reached the heavens, he realized at once that some of the fire from the sun would be the most useful gift he could bring to mortals, since heat was the one thing he had always longed for in order to assist mankind; and knowing that Minerva would never give him so valuable a present—since the gods had hitherto selfishly withheld the wonderful gift of fire from men—he determined to steal the good thing he wanted. Therefore he concealed a little fire in the hollow staff that he carried with him, and hastily returned with it to the earth, where he now succeeded in carrying out the difficult tasks he had set himself to do, and began to teach men how to make use of the splendid gift he had brought them—how to work in metals and in clay by means of the heat they could now obtain, how to cook their food, and to do many other useful things they had never dreamed of before.

The gods had always regarded Prometheus as a person to be feared, since he was teaching mortals to become wiser and more skilful every day; and now that he had actually stolen fire from heaven for their needs, they became extremely angry and full of alarm.

They began to be afraid lest mortals should become too wise, and learn the mighty secrets of Nature, which they had always tried to conceal from them; and they determined to punish Prometheus for his theft, and at the same time to put such burdens upon the dwellers on earth as would prevent them from ever becoming the equals of the gods.

Until this time the mortals who lived in the world had been perfectly happy, and had never known pain, disease, sorrow, or trouble of any kind. There had been no wickedness, since bad thoughts were unknown; and no one had ever been ill, because the people had always lived such simple lives that their bodies could not be anything else but strong and healthy, since they had no occasion even to overtire themselves.

But now, as the result of what Prometheus had done for the benefit of mortals, all this happy simplicity was to be changed, and pain and woe were to be sent to mingle with the gladness of man—this being judged by the gods as the best means of keeping the dwellers upon earth subject to their heavenly rulers.

Jupiter, the mighty King of Olympus, commanded Vulcan, the God of Fire and Metals, to make a lovely mortal maiden, who, when she was formed and endowed with life, was given the name of Pandora, which means "Giver of all"; and all the gods gave the maiden a wonderful gift of some kind, in order to make her so charming and fascinating that she might attract mankind, upon whom she was destined to bring trouble.

Venus adorned the maiden with beauty, and Mercury endowed her with cunning and quick wits; Apollo gave her a musical voice; and all the gods gave her the same gift for which they were renowned themselves.

When all the gifts had been made, Pandora was carried to the earth by Mercury, the messenger of the gods, who took her first of all to the abode of Prometheus, together with a strange sealed box, which was filled with every kind of ill that could afflict mankind. The box was closely sealed; but although the gods had forbidden Pandora to open the chest, they hoped—and, in fact, felt certain—that, sooner or later, she would do so, and thus set free the prisoned woes.

Now, when Prometheus beheld the lovely Pandora standing upon his threshold, he would have nothing to do with her at all, feeling sure that she was a snare of some kind sent for his undoing by the gods whom he had offended; and fearing even to look long upon the fair maiden, lest her beauty should tempt him to receive her kindly, he bade Mercury take her hence at once, and roughly turned his back upon the travellers.

Mercury, however, was not disturbed by this rude conduct; and swiftly he turned away and conveyed Pandora and her box to the abode of Epimetheus, the brother of Prometheus, feeling sure that a welcome would be given by him to the stranger.

And Epimetheus, though he had been warned by his brother never to accept a gift from the jealous gods, was so charmed with the beautiful Pandora that he received her with great gladness. So Mercury left the fair maiden with Epimetheus, together with the mysterious sealed box; and after again cautioning the pair not to open the chest, he returned alone to Olympus, where the gods eagerly awaited the result of their plan.

And what they desired quickly came to pass; for Pandora and her new companion had no sooner been left alone than they both wanted to know what was inside the strange box.

"Let us open it!" pleaded Pandora, as she gazed at the fine carved pictures on the sides of the chest. "There is surely something beautiful inside—perhaps some wonderful thing which we have never seen before."

"Oh no, dear Pandora, we must not do so," replied Epimetheus, who was young and handsome to look upon, and who was already in love with Pandora and had made up his mind to marry her. "We were commanded not to open the box, for fear harm should come of it."

"But what harm *could* come of it?" asked Pandora in wonder. "There has never been anything that harms in the world, for Mercury told me so himself as he brought me here; and *he* ought to know, surely. Do let us open the box, then, for I feel sure there is something wonderful inside—perhaps something that will be a great delight to us both."

But Epimetheus still refused her request, though he really felt just as curious about the mysterious box as she did and fully intended to open it himself later on as soon as he could summon up courage to do so; and Pandora, although she certainly felt somewhat vexed with her new friend for not agreeing to her desire, said no more about the matter at that moment.

A little later, however, Epimetheus went out into the meadows to gather flowers to make into a wreath to place on the glistening locks of the lovely maiden whom the gods had sent to him; and then Pandora returned to the magic box and gazed with longing eyes at the forbidden treasure.

Suddenly, as she knelt down to examine more closely the beautifully-carved pictures on the side of the chest, it seemed to her that she could hear strange voices from within calling out to her: "Save us, kind Pandora! Set us free from this dark prison! If only you will do so, you will quickly know many wonderful things you have never known before—things which no mortal in the world knows yet. Knowledge is a good thing, and greatly to be desired. Therefore, set us free, good Pandora, and grow wise as the gods themselves."

The longer Pandora listened to these strange tempting voices, the more curious and excited she grew; and she thought to herself: "I don't see why I should not open the box and set free these unhappy captives. Surely no harm could come of it; and it will be good for me to learn all I can, for I want to be clever like the great goddess

Minerva and to know many wise things. I will open the magic box at once, before my new friend comes back to prevent me from so doing."

So the fair maiden lifted up the lid of the strange chest; and immediately afterwards she uttered a shriek of terror, and called out for her companion. For out of the box came a swarm of frightful little winged imps, all with hideous black faces and cruel sharp stings in their scorpion tails; and as Epimetheus hastened back from the meadows on hearing Pandora's screams, he was filled with dismay as he realized what had happened.

He rushed forward at once and closed down the lid of the magic box with a bang; and he was just in time to see that, unhappily, all the wicked black imps had escaped, and that only one bright little creature remained in the bottom of the box.

The youth and the maiden were terribly alarmed and were also soon in pain; for before they had time to hide themselves, they had both been stung by some of the ugly little imps that were still buzzing around them like a swarm of angry giant hornets.

Now these horrible stinging imps, as you will have guessed, were really the evils and woes which had been put in the magic chest by the gods, and which have ever since troubled the dwellers upon earth—such as aches and pains of all kinds, bad tempers, selfishness, cruelty, greediness, and everything that causes misery to human beings.

Before that time there had never been any of these unpleasant woes to trouble mortals; but now that Pandora had opened the magic box, she had set free the imps of evil, and they soon began to fly all over the world, in order to sting people and make them unhappy.

Pandora was full of sorrow when she realized what terrible harm she had done by not obeying the command laid upon her by the gods; and she wept many bitter tears—the first that had ever been shed in the world!

Epimetheus, too, wept and shared her grief; for, though he had scolded her at first, he could not blame her for long, since he knew that he ought not to have left her alone with the tempting magic chest, which had been put into his charge as well as hers.

His conscience also reminded him that, sooner or later, he had meant to open the casket himself, had not his new companion forestalled him; and so he felt ashamed, and, knowing that he also, in a great measure, was to blame for what had happened, he tried to comfort Pandora.

Presently, whilst the unhappy pair still sat weeping together, with their arms twined around each other, they heard, to their surprise, yet another voice calling to them from within the box: "Let *me* out, also, kind Pandora and Epimetheus, that I may help you and all other mortals to bear the burdens laid upon you by the ills you have set free. I am no imp of evil, but a loving fairy; and if you leave me here, a captive, I cannot perform the good deeds I wish to do. Oh, come quickly, and set me free; for I, alone, can bring you comfort."

Feeling that no greater calamity could possibly happen now, the sorrowful companions opened the magic casket once more; and this time a dainty little fairy creature with bright wings of rose-colour flew out, as light and lovely as a butterfly.

As Pandora and Epimetheus gazed in wonder at this delightful stranger, the Fairy said to them in sweet and soothing tones: "Do not despair, fair children of earth, but look upon me. My name is Hope; and I am truly glad that you have set me free, or no mortal would have cared to live longer in the world! I prithee, do not lose heart, Pandora and Epimetheus; for though—through your own wrong-doing in yielding to temptation—trouble, disease, and pain, from which you cannot escape, have come into your fair young lives, yet I shall be with you always to comfort you and to help you to find peace and joy once more. Behold! Because I am with you and have laid my healing touch upon you, the painful wounds caused by the stings of evil have even now ceased to hurt."

This was true; and Pandora and Epimetheus both felt greatly cheered as the Fairy of Hope went on: "Then, weep no more, fair mortals since your pains have vanished already and you will soon be well again; but be grateful that the mighty gods whom you have offended have not altogether crushed you, but, in their gracious mercy, have provided comfort for you even in the midst of your deepest woes. Remember that I, the Fairy of Hope, have been sent to dwell in the world, as the greatest comforter of mankind; and when other troubles and evils come back from time to time to wound you with their sharp stings—as they certainly will—despair not, for I shall still be here to help you to bear them."

Thus were Pandora and Epimetheus comforted, and soon took joy in their sweet new companionship once more; and though, later on, the ugly little imps of evil did indeed return to sting them many more times, they always found the kindly Fairy of Hope beside them on such sad occasions to prevent them from despairing, bringing them words of cheer and comfort, and easing their pains by telling them of happy days yet to come.

You may be inclined to think that it was cruel of the gods to send trouble upon the dwellers on earth; but who can say? Perhaps, after all, they were only wise, and thought it was good for people at times to endure the dark days of unhappiness and to learn to bear pain, so that they might be better able to enjoy the sunshine of gladness, beauty, and health, and thus to be grateful for the many pleasant things also given to them.

No mortal has ever yet been able to solve this mighty problem of the reason for pain and woe; but since, with the entrance of Evil, the rosy Fairy of Hope came into the world at the same time, there is comfort for all, even in the worst of woes.

The various poets tell us the story of Pandora, and also that of Prometheus, in somewhat different ways; but the one I have told you above seems to be the most reasonable one.

Some say that the reason why Prometheus stole the fire from heaven was that, having himself made a man of clay and water, he wanted the fire to put warmth and life into the wonderful being he had created. Others also declare that Pandora was the first woman to live upon the earth; and some even say that it was not Vulcan who made her, but Prometheus himself, and that the gods came down to the earth to bestow their gifts upon her, and that, still fearful of losing some of their power, they presented her at the same time with the magic box of human ills, knowing that, some day, she would set them free to work havoc in the world.

One writer adds another curious fable in connection with this strange story. He says that when mankind had received the fire stolen from heaven for them by Prometheus, some of the mortals most ungratefully went secretly to Jupiter and told him of the theft, and that the great god, as a reward for the information, said that he would bestow upon them the gift of perpetual youth—but, very cunningly, he placed this precious gift upon the back of an ass to carry to the earth, knowing well that the stupid beast would do something foolish with it and that it would never come within reach of the mortals it was supposed to be intended for. As the ass went upon its journey, it came to a spring, and, being thirsty, stooped to drink; but suddenly a serpent appeared, and refused to allow the parched creature to quench its thirst unless it would give up to him the burden upon its back. The foolish ass, thinking only of its own thirst, and forgetful of its mission, loosened the pack from its back, and gladly stooped to drink; and so the serpent became possessed of the most precious gift of the gods. Thus it was believed by the ancients that as the serpent grew older, he cast his skin, and seemed to grow young again.

The poets also tell us that as a punishment for having stolen fire from heaven, Jupiter commanded Mercury to chain Prometheus to a rock (some say he was bound to Mount Caucasus), where an eagle was sent to him daily to devour his liver, which grew again during the night; and after enduring this torment for a long time, he was at last rescued by Hercules, the mighty strong man of the Greeks, who broke his chains and set him free.

Very possibly the meaning of this wonderful fable is as follows: Prometheus (whose name is derived from a word meaning *forethought*) was a very clever and prudent person; and because he taught and educated mankind from a low savage state, he was said to have made men from the dirt or clay. Because he was eager to learn all he could about the heavens and studied the stars from the summit of Mount Caucasus, it was said that he was chained there; and because he studied so industriously and constantly, people imagined an eagle preying continually upon his vitals. Also, the ancients declared that he stole fire from heaven because he taught them to strike a flint with a piece of metal to get a spark, and because also he was the first man to discover the nature of lightning.

The story of Pandora is, of course, the manner in which the Greeks and Romans accounted for the coming of evil and pain into the world—which latter ills the Jews accounted for by the beautiful Bible story of Adam and Eve.

The Story of Proserpina

One of the best-beloved of the goddesses who dwelt in Olympus was Ceres (called by the Greeks Demeter), Good Mother Ceres, as she was often affectionately spoken of; for she it was who made the corn grow and the earth bring forth flowers, fruits, and green herbs for the use of men and gods. She had charge of the seed when it was dropped into the ground; and when the young shoots came through, she watched over them with loving care and helped them to grow into strong plants that bore good fruit and ripened into golden fullness by her magic touch.

No one could do without the assistance and loving labours of Good Mother Ceres; for had she not worked so constantly and well, there would never have been any harvest at all and the people on the earth would have died of starvation. So everybody loved the busy goddess, and all were kind to her.

Ceres had a beautiful young daughter whose name was Proserpina (called by the Greeks Persephone), and whom she loved very dearly. Everything that was fair, and lovely, and good for a maiden to have, Mother Ceres gave to her child; and Proserpina was well brought up, and was taught to be kind and loving.

This good mother and her beloved child had only one thing to complain of that spoilt their happiness; and this was that they could not be always together. It sometimes happened that Ceres was obliged to travel far and wide in order to watch over and tend the corn and plants in distant lands; and as she could not always take Proserpina to these far-away places, the fair maiden was occasionally left alone. And then the tender mother would weep, since she was always afraid that some terrible harm might befall her child during her absence; and Proserpina would weep too, though not for long, since she had many merry friends with whom she could play and pass away the hours.

One day when she was obliged to travel to a far-distant land, Ceres felt sadder than usual at having to leave her child behind, and she wished to shut her up in a sealed cave, as she sometimes did, for safety; but the beautiful Proserpina kissed away her mother's tears, and said brightly: "Nay, nay, do not weep, dear mother; for the time will pass away quickly, and thou wilt soon be home again. Do not lock me up in that dark cave, I prithee, for I will promise to take good care of myself; and, as thou knowest, it is good for me to be out in the warmth and light, that I may grow and catch the dazzling sunbeams in the meshes of my golden locks. I will ask the merry nymphs, my gentle companions, to join me, and we will go forth into the meadows to sport together and to gather the fair flowers that blossom there. Oh, let me go free, dear mother."

"Very well, my fair child," agreed the gentle goddess of the corn, though somewhat reluctantly. "But be sure not to wander far a-field, my beloved one; and run back at once if thou seest a stranger. Thou art so beautiful to look upon that I am always afraid someone will run away with thee one of these fine days."

But Proserpina laughed so merrily on hearing this, and promised to take such extra good care of herself this time, that Mother Ceres felt somewhat reassured as she drove away in her famous car—which was drawn by a fine pair of winged dragons—her long golden hair flying in the breeze and crowned with ears of ripe corn, and holding in her hand a great bunch of scarlet poppies and corn.

Very soon afterwards Proserpina went out to sport in the meadows with a number of dainty nymphs who were always glad to be her companions; and they ran races together, played with cowslip-balls, and gathered great bunches of the lovely flowers which grew around them so luxuriantly on every side.

Now, whilst fair Proserpina and her merry nymph companions disported themselves happily in the meadows above, dark Pluto, the King of the Under-world (sometimes called Hades by the Greeks and Dis by the Romans), sat on an ebony throne in his gloomy abode, feeling more lonely than he had ever done before. He was a mighty king, since he ruled over the spirits of the departed; and he was also possessed of great wealth, since all the precious stones and metals buried in the earth were his. Also, he was very majestic to look upon, being of great stature, with piercing black eyes, and long black hair which lay massed upon his forehead; and sometimes he wore a long black veil draped about his shoulders like a mantle, which added to his kingly dignity of appearance. He possessed a magic helmet which rendered him invisible; and he drove about in his dark underground kingdom in a golden chariot drawn by splendid black prancing horses with reins and trappings of gold.

There were many wonderful things to be seen in the kingdom of Pluto, who was the brother of Jupiter, King of the Heavens, and of Neptune, King of the Seas. Here, on the borders, was the gloomy black River Styx, where the souls of the departed were ferried across by Charon, the famous ferryman, and set down in the Land of Shades, from whence they could never return. Here, also, was the great, black, bottomless pit called Tartarus, into which were thrust all those spirits who had done evil in their lives upon earth; and beyond the King's palace—which was a very gloomy abode and guarded at the entrance by a fierce three-headed dog named Cerberus—lay the Elysian fields, or Elysium, the abode of the blest, where dwelt all those spirits who had done good deeds during their lives.

The veil of gloom was not so heavy in the Elysian fields, where gleamed a soft, violet light and where the air was fresher; and here, walking in the Fortunate Groves of Delight, one might meet the shades of the mighty heroes of the past and all whose names were still held in honoured memory in the world above. These blessed ones were crowned with myrtle and laurels; and they danced and sang songs of joy, and held sweet converse with one another.

But though Pluto might have joined in the gladness of the Blest, he did not do so; and he continued to sit upon his ebony throne, full of gloom and loneliness. He longed for a beautiful queen to share his glory with him, and to enliven his dull palace with her gracious presence; but though he had wooed many of the fairest goddesses, they would none of them consent to dwell, even with so mighty a king, in the dark underworld, since all dreaded the Land of Shades and had no desire to go thither.

At last, however, Jupiter took pity on his lonely brother, and promised that he should wed fair Proserpina, whose father was the mighty King of Olympus himself, taking care, however, to keep this promise a secret from the good goddess Ceres,

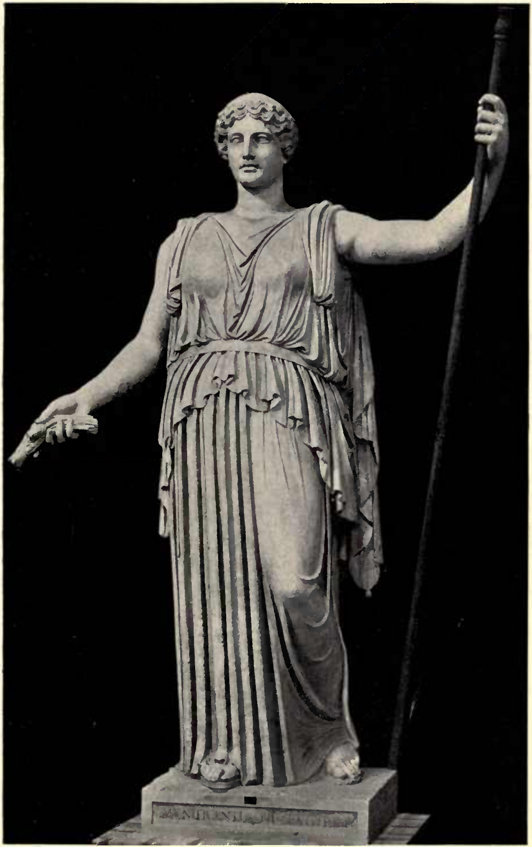

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Photo. Alinari

CERES

From the statue in the Vatican Museum, Rome

knowing well that she would never consent to part with her daughter.

Thus it came to pass that on the day that Proserpina went out to sport in the meadows with her nymph companions and to gather garlands of flowers, King Pluto upon his ebony throne below was gloomily wondering how he could ever hope to woo the beautiful Proserpina, when she was always so closely guarded by her mother and would certainly never be willing to wed so dismal a person as himself; and he had just made up his mind that he would have to use force in order to gain his wish, when, suddenly, lively Mercury, the swift messenger of the gods, appeared before him and said:

"Waste not thy time in gloomy grumblings, oh mighty Pluto, but be up and doing. Use thy wits and strength; for, behold, the fair Proserpina even now sporteth in the meadows above. Since thou hast the means of swift travelling, it should not be difficult for thee to seize thy promised bride."

Pluto then roused himself and eagerly devised some means of magic whereby he might the better carry out his plan; and then, springing into his golden chariot, he took up the glittering reins, and his fiery black steeds sprang forward gallantly as he drove them with furious haste upwards to the earth through the winding dark passages of the under-world.

Meanwhile, the artless Proserpina, forgetful of danger, had wandered away from her nymph companions, whom she soon left far behind; for the farther she went, the more lovely flowers she found. It was the glorious springtime, and she soon had her hands full of tall lilies, golden daffodils, purple violets, bright-eyed daisies, and blue forget-me-nots; and then, suddenly, her eyes fell upon a wonderful giant flower, more beautiful than any she had ever seen before. It was a splendid narcissus, a noble flower of truly marvellous beauty, a sight to wonder at; for it had a hundred perfect heads of bloom growing from its single pillar-like stem; and the sweet perfume of it was almost overpowering.

Full of delight, and little dreaming that a snare had been placed for her, Proserpina ran eagerly towards the strange flower to pluck it; but, to her surprise, she could not snap off the stem, and so tried to pull it up by the roots instead.

For a long time she could not stir the plant; and then, quite suddenly, she pulled it out by its root, so that a large hole remained.

And now she soon realized that magic must be at work, since the hole in the ground quickly grew larger and larger, until at last it looked like the mouth of a vast cave; and at the same time she heard a loud rumbling like thunder in the ground below.

Next moment there sprang out through the opening the golden chariot of the King of the Under-world, glittering with precious gems, and drawn by jet-black prancing steeds, caparisoned with gold; and, driving in this splendid car, Proserpina's terrified eyes beheld a strange-looking dark man, with black hair and piercing black eyes, who quickly drew near to the shrinking maiden and said in a deep, yet tender voice:

"Fair daughter of the good Goddess Ceres, behold in me Pluto, King of the Land of Shades. I have come hither in haste to take thee away with me to be my Queen, and to sit beside me on my ebony throne. Be not afraid, oh maiden beautiful as the summer dawn; but haste thee to enter my chariot, for my fiery steeds are impatient of standing."

"Oh no! no!" cried Proserpina, in a great fright. "I don't want to be a queen; and I won't go away with thee, for I wish to dwell always with my good mother, who would weep bitterly were I to leave her. Depart, dark stranger; for I will not go away with thee in thy golden chariot."

"But I mean to have thee, fair Proserpina," said King Pluto, quietly but firmly. "Thou hast been promised to me as a bride by my glorious brother, Jupiter, the mighty King of Olympus. I am lonely, and have no fair maidens in my palace; and thou wilt be like a sunbeam in my gloomy halls. Thou wilt be the richest Queen ever heard of; and I will make thee very happy, for I love thee dearly."

As King Pluto spoke these last words, he smiled; and when he smiled, he looked so much pleasanter that Proserpina did not feel so frightened as before, and even began to think that it was a pity so splendid a King should be lonely, and have no fair maidens in his palace.

Thinking that it would only be kind to offer a few flowers to the dark stranger, she drew nearer to the car, shyly holding out a few of the choicest blossoms in her hand; but instantly King Pluto snatched her up into the chariot, and drove away with her at a furious rate to his gloomy palace in the under-world.

It was in vain that poor Proserpina wept and begged to be sent back to her mother; for the lonely King was so glad to have a fair maiden in his palace at last that he kept her as his bride in accordance with the promise of Jupiter, placed a crown of dazzling jewels upon her golden locks, and thus made her Queen of the Under-world.

And though Proserpina grieved for a long time and never ceased to wish to return to her beloved mother, she was not altogether unhappy in her new abode; for the dark King with the black eyes loved her dearly and was very kind to her, allowing her to sport in his palace all day long, and even occasionally to wander into the Elysian fields. He gave her a glittering robe of golden gauze and long chains of dazzling jewels to wear; and he never ceased begging of her to eat the rich foods he had ordered to be made ready for her. But Proserpina refused all the food he offered her, since she only liked crushed corn and meal cakes, and the sweet juicy fruits of the earth, none of which were to be found in the dark under-world.

Meanwhile, the Goddess Ceres had returned to her home and was filled with grief when she found that her beloved child was lost. She called together the nymphs who had been the companions of Proserpina on the fatal day on which she had vanished, and asked them what had happened; but they could tell her nothing, since they had not seen anything of the golden chariot with its prancing black horses, nor of the splendid dark King with the piercing black eyes who had snatched up their beautiful playmate.

So the unhappy Ceres left her home and wandered forth into the world, weeping and wailing, in search of her lost child; but for a long time no one could tell her any news about fair Proserpina.

Then, at last, she was advised to go to Apollo, the sun-god, who could see everything that happened in the daytime in every part of the world; and the glorious sun-god told her that he had seen Pluto, King of the Under-world, drive forth in his golden chariot from a great hole in the ground, snatch up Proserpina as she gathered flowers in the meadows, and return with her to the Land of Shades, where he had wedded her and crowned her as his Queen.

Ceres was filled with despair when she heard this terrible news; and she hastened at once to great Jupiter in Olympus and entreated him to command Pluto to restore her stolen daughter without delay.

However, Jupiter did not wish to offend Pluto, after having promised the dark god that he should have Proserpina for his bride; so he refused the request of the weeping mother, bidding her to grieve no longer, since her fair daughter was now a powerful queen and would soon be quite happy in the under-world, where everybody was kind to her and where she was greatly beloved by the King, her husband.

But Ceres, sad at heart and lonely, wept all the more; and she wandered over the world, refusing to perform her usual task of attending to the growing corn and plants.

In the land of Eleusis she found comfort for a time by nursing the King's son, Demophoon, whom she grew to love so dearly that she desired to make him immortal by breathing her own divine breath upon him by day, and by holding him at night in the flames of a fire which danced harmlessly about him. But one night the child's mother, Queen Metaneira, saw what the stranger nurse was doing, and, in her terror, aroused the whole household to observe also. Ceres, full of anger, declared that the spell had thus been broken, and that the royal child, Demophoon, could never now become immortal, although he should still be a great hero and be honoured by all because he had lain in the arms of a goddess; and when the King and Queen of Eleusis thus realized that the stranger they had received into their palace was divine, they were filled with awe, and caused a splendid temple to be built for her on a certain hill known as Callichorus.

Here Ceres dwelt alone with her sorrow for a very long time; and she never went out to help the young plants to come through the ground, or to see that the green corn grew properly.

Thus it came to pass that, after a while, the ground became bare and nothing grew upon it; and, since there was no food to be got, owing to the famine, the dwellers upon earth began to starve.

It was of no use for the hungry people to go to the still-sorrowing Ceres in her far-away temple and entreat her to come forth to make the corn and fruits grow again; for all she said was: "I will not come forth again into the sunshine and watch over the plants until my fair daughter Proserpina is brought home to me once more."

And so, at last, in order to prevent all mankind from starving, Jupiter was compelled to send

Mercury, his fleet-footed messenger, to the under-world, to command King Pluto to restore his beautiful Queen, Proserpina, to her weeping mother again, providing, however, that she had not partaken of any food in his domain.

Now, Pluto did not dare to disobey his powerful brother, Jupiter; but he tried more than ever to persuade Proserpina to eat of the good things he had provided for her, for, if only he could do that, he knew that she could not be taken away from him, since, if any living person took food in the under-world, he or she was obliged to remain there for ever and could not be taken away even by the mighty Jupiter himself.

Seeing that Proserpina still refused to partake of any of the food to be obtained in his own kingdom, the dark King sent forth a messenger to obtain some fresh fruit from the earth. For his fair bride had said many times: "If only thou wouldst bring me a rosy apple, or a ripe pomegranate, I would eat it gladly; but I like not the appearance of the food thou hast in this strange, dark land, and I dare not eat it."

But ever since Mother Ceres, in her sorrow at the loss of her child, had hidden herself away, no new fruits had grown upon the earth; and all that Pluto's messenger could find, after searching far and wide, was one small, dried-up pomegranate, with scarcely a drop of juice in it.

When Proserpina saw the pomegranate, however, she accepted it eagerly; and she had just eaten about a third of its dried-up seeds when Mercury came into her presence with the wonderful news that she was to be allowed to return to her mother, the good goddess Ceres.

Proserpina clapped her hands for joy when she heard this glad news; but King Pluto said: "Do not be too full of joy, Proserpina, for thou art still my Queen and may only remain eight months of the year with Mother Ceres; for, remember this, thou hast partaken of a third part of that pomegranate given thee but now, and therefore, because thou hast eaten food in my kingdom, thou must return to dwell with me for a third part of every year. For eight months I shall live here in loneliness, without a Queen, and full of gloom and sadness; and then, for four happy months, I shall have thee, my beloved one, to sit on the ebony throne beside me, to bring me joy and to make my palace ring with laughter and merriment."

"Oh yes, dear Pluto, right gladly will I return to thee for a third of every year!" cried Proserpina, as she placed her glittering crown in the hands of the dark King and looked up bravely into his black eyes. "Thou hast been very gracious to me, oh my King, and I have grown to love thee well."

Some writers tell us that Ceres herself went into the under-world to fetch her daughter away from King Pluto, and that no one would ever have known that Proserpina had partaken of food in the Land of Shades had not an attendant named Ascalaphus revealed the fact that he had seen the fair young Queen take a bite out of a pomegranate in the King's garden; and for giving forth this bad news, whereby it was necessary for her beloved daughter to spend three months of each year in the under-world, Ceres, in her anger, caused an enormous stone to fall upon the informer, who thus lay pinned to the ground until released a long time hence by Hercules, who removed the stone. After this Ascalaphus was changed into an owl — a creature which has always been regarded as a bird of ill omen ever since — by Proserpina, who still bore a grudge against him.

However that may be, Proserpina was restored to her mother, who received her with great joy; and then the flowers, and fruits, and corn quickly began to grow upon the earth once more, since their growth was now tended again by the busy goddess.

But now Mother Ceres always took her beloved child out with her wherever she went, no matter how far she might have to travel, fearing lest some other handsome stranger should steal her darling away; and for eight sunny months of every year Proserpina lived upon the earth, and also visited the gods in Olympus.

Then, for the other four months, the fair maiden returned to King Pluto and dwelt with him as Queen of the Under-world; and these were days of joy for the black-eyed King. Nor was it long before Proserpina grew to love dearly her splendid royal lord; and when she took her place beside him on his ebony throne, with a glittering crown upon her golden hair, she felt glad that he was her King and that he had stolen her away so boldly that bright springtime morning when she had wandered forth into the meadows to gather the fair sweet flowers that blossomed there.

The meaning of this charming fable is as follows: Proserpina is intended to represent the seed which grows within the earth. The seed lies buried in the dark ground for the four winter months—which corresponds to Proserpina's stay in the under-world; and then during the eight months of spring, summer, and autumn that follow it breaks forth, grows, and ripens into fruit, just as fair Proserpina dwelt in the sunshine of the earth for eight glad months.

Philemon and Baucis

One wild and stormy evening an old man of Phrygia, named Philemon, and his wife, Baucis, sat in their cottage, talking together by the fireside in great content. Though they were growing old and were very poor, they were still as happy as in the days of their youth; for sweet love was with them yet and the joy in their hearts had never left them.

Their humble cottage was on the hillside, a little way apart from other houses; and though they always had a kind welcome for every traveller or visitor who came to see them, they did not have many dealings with the village folk in the valley below, who were so wicked, selfish, and cruel that the gods in Olympus had already determined to punish them that night.

Philemon and Baucis, however, were unaware that anything strange was about to happen; and though the storm that had arisen during the day became worse every hour, it did not trouble them, since they were both safe and snug within doors, sitting side by side on their cosy hearth.

But just as old Baucis rose to prepare their simple evening meal, she heard the sound of a great noise down the hillside, and knew that the evil people in the village below must be driving out some poor wanderer who had sought shelter there; for the rude villagers were never hospitable to strangers, but always chased them out with dogs and flung stones after them.

"I fear those rough folks down yonder are driving out some poor weary traveller," she said, as she peeped without. "And it is such a terribly stormy night for anyone to be out. How can they be so selfish?"

"Perhaps the stranger may come to us, dear wife," said kind old Philemon. "If so, we will make him welcome, so that he shall not want for shelter after all."

"I hope that it may be so," agreed gentle Baucis.

A few minutes later there did indeed come the sound of approaching footsteps; and Philemon gladly hastened to open the door.

A brilliant flash of lightning showed him that two strangers were standing without, one of whom was very tall, stern, and kingly-looking, and the other a slender, graceful youth, with a wonderfully light, quick step. Both were wrapped in long flowing mantles; and seeing that they were wet through, Philemon at once drew them into the cottage and closed the door again quickly to keep out the boisterous wind and driving rain.

"Come in, come in, good sirs!" he cried eagerly. "Welcome to our humble home. We are but poor folk and simple in our ways of living; but such food and warmth as we have we are always willing to share with the wayfarer. Come in!"

So saying, the old man led his guests to the warm fireside, where he made them sit down whilst he relieved them of their wet cloaks, which he hung up to dry; and Baucis made haste to set out the simple supper, laying upon the table some cakes of bread, a dish of fresh fruit and herbs from the garden, a comb of golden honey, and a jug of new milk.

Whilst Philemon was busy looking after his guests, he could not help noticing that there were many strange peculiarities about them, and that they were much finer to look upon than any other persons he had ever seen.

The elder and taller stranger had handsome features and an air of majesty; but his face was stern just now, for he was still thinking of the evil people he had just left in the village below. The graceful youth, though also very dignified, had so much that was strange about him that old Philemon's eyes soon opened wide in amazement. For one thing, he had little wings on his sandals and on his cap; and he was so light and quick in his movements that he scarcely seemed to touch the ground as he walked. Then he carried with him a very remarkable staff, which also had little wings on it, as well as a pair of serpents twisted around it.

However, though Philemon had never seen such strange people before, he was much too polite to make any remarks about the fact, or to stare too long at his guests; and presently, when Baucis announced that supper was ready, they all sat down at the table to eat and drink.

Now, although the old couple knew it not, the strangers to whom they had offered such welcome hospitality were none other than Jupiter, King of the gods in Olympus, and Mercury, the god of cunning and gain, who was also known as the messenger of the gods because his winged sandals made him so fleet of foot.

The gods had known for a long time that the people in this Phrygian village were very bad and selfish, and that strangers and travellers were always treated churlishly by them; and, therefore, Jupiter had come himself, with Mercury as his companion, to prove the truth of the tales that had been told him of their cruel treatment of strangers, intending to punish the offenders if he found them so bad as was said.

He had not long been left in doubt, since, in their journey thoughout Phrygia, he had found no one willing to entertain himself and his companion until they had reached their present resting-place, and he had already determined tc punish the offenders that night by means of the terrible storm that was even now raging without; but having, to his surprise, found a most kindly welcome at the cottage of old Philemon and Baucis, he was well pleased, and hoped to find out some way of returning such kindly hospitality.

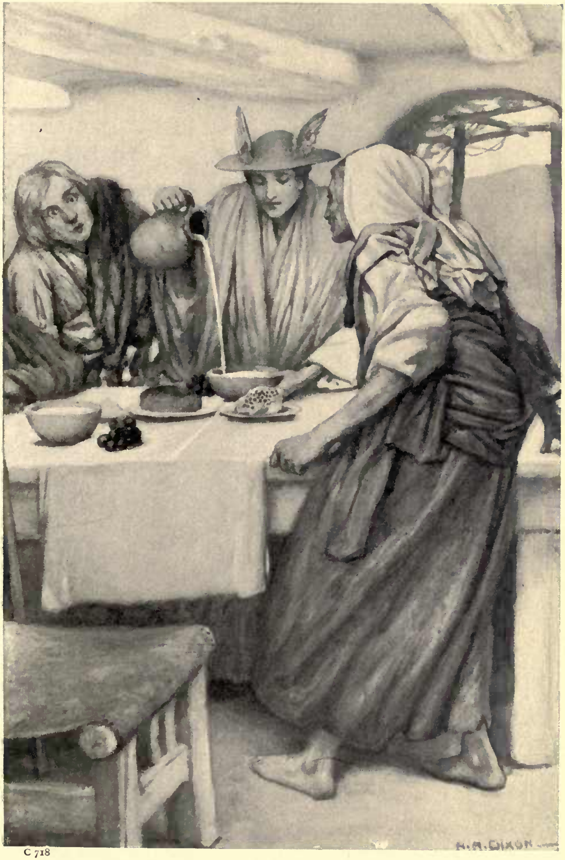
"How is it that, though I can see thou art old and poor, thou canst still be so happy and so fair to look upon?" he asked Baucis, who replied at once in her gentle old voice: "I am happy because I have love in my heart; and if I am still fair to look upon, it is love that makes me so."

Now, Mercury was fond of a good joke; and it was not long before he made the old couple open their eyes wide with astonishment. Observing that the milk jug was now empty, he asked for it to be replenished; and when Baucis replied with real regret that there was not another drop of milk in the house, he tilted up the empty jug and at once a constant stream of fresh new milk poured out, some of which was lapped up by the two serpents twisted around his staff.

Then when Philemon humbly poured out a cup of water for himself, not wishing to take the milk set before his guests, he was presently amazed to find, when he put it to his lips, that it had been transformed into rich red wine!

Everything the strangers touched they made more beautiful and rich. The simple fruits in the dish grew larger and finer than any ever seen in that land before; and the bread and honey tasted more delicious than the richest foods at a royal feast.

When they saw these wonders, Philemon and



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MERCURY ASTONISHES PHILEMON AND BAUCIS

Baucis now realized that their guests were not ordinary mortals; but since they were too polite to ask them any questions, they continued to talk to them in their simple way. When it was time to retire to rest, they hospitably gave up their own sleeping chamber to the guests, and laid themselves down upon the hard floor to sleep before the hearth.

Next morning the kind old couple rose betimes in order to prepare another meal for their exalted visitors; but Jupiter and Mercury declared that they could not wait for it, since they wished to proceed on their journey. Then Jupiter revealed to his humble host and hostess the true identity of himself and his companion; and when Philemon and Baucis knew that it was the mighty god Jupiter who had been their guest, they fell on their knees before him, full of fear.

Jupiter, however, raised them at once, and said to them graciously: "Ye have nothing to fear from me, good Philemon and Baucis. I and my companion came hither as weary travellers, and ye treated us well; and, therefore, we will do well by ye. Yet think not that I came hither for this purpose alone. I came to see if the people in Phrygia, and, in particular, in the village below, were really as evil and inhospitable as I had been told; and I found that what I had learned from others was indeed the truth. Therefore, to punish them, I have covered over this village and the valley beneath with water, and these people with cold hearts now lie beneath the waves. Behold!"

And when Philemon and Baucis looked down the hillside, they saw that where the village had stood yesterday there was now a deep lake, which flooded the whole valley and was still turbulent from the recent storm; and they felt sorry for the fate of the evil people who had dwelt there.

"Do not weep for them," said Jupiter: "they do not deserve pity. But, tell me, have ye any wish to be granted? Ye have proved kind and good, and because ye have shown hospitality to strangers, any desire ye may have shall now be granted!"

"But we have love and are perfectly happy already, so what more *can* we want?" asked the simple old pair.

"Yet think once again," said Jupiter, with gentle insistence; and then Baucis said very timidly: "Though we are happy, yet we are old, and must soon expect to be parted from one another. Is it too much to ask, oh my gracious lord, that my dear Philemon and I may live together for many more happy years, and that when at last death draws nigh unto us, we may die in the same hour, still full of love as we have ever been, and depart to the Land of Shades together?"

"It is not too much to ask," said Jupiter, "and it shall be granted unto thee, gentle Baucis. Ye shall dwell together for many more happy years, and your hearts shall always remain young and full of love; and when death shall come at last—as come it must—ye shall die in the same hour and depart together to the Land of Shades."

Then Jupiter and Mercury suddenly vanished out of sight in a vivid flash of lightning, followed by a loud peal of thunder; and when Philemon and Baucis turned back to enter their home, they found that their humble cottage on the hillside had been transformed into a wonderful temple, with pleasant rooms in it in which they could live and a beautiful garden in which they could sit out in the sunshine.

Here Philemon and Baucis now dwelt as servers in the temple for many more happy years; and every weary traveller who came past that way they had a kind welcome for, and many were the poor beggars they clothed and fed.

And so full of love were they and so young did their happy hearts feel that, in the eyes of Philemon, Baucis was still as beautiful as in the days of her early youth; and in the eyes of Baucis, Philemon was still as handsome and wonderful as when he had first wooed her—and as the years went on their love and happiness grew deeper still.

And then, at last, after they had lived to a very great age, when the worshippers came to the temple one morning, they found that the good old couple were no longer there; for, during the evening before, as they sat side by side at the temple door at sunset, they had gently passed away in the same hour, and Mercury, the messenger of the gods, had come to conduct their gentle spirits to the Land of Shades, where they had entered the Elysian fields together.

But, in their places, on either side of the temple door, there now stood an oak tree and a linden tree; and as the branches of the trees grew, they twined together. Then, when the north and the east winds swayed the branches from side to side. it seemed to the worshippers who still came thither that the oak tree murmured in a happy whisper: "I am old Philemon, and I still love my dear Baucis."

And when the south and west winds gently stirred the leaves to and fro, then the linden tree sighed softly: "I am old Baucis, and I still love my dear Philemon."

Thus did Jupiter keep his promise; and Philemon and Baucis, who had loved one another dearly in their lives, in death were not divided.

Europa and Cadmus

Agenor, King of Phœnicia, had three fine sons named Cadmus, Phœnix, and Cilix, and one fair young daughter named Europa; but of all his children, he loved Europa best. He was so proud of the latter's beauty and so afraid lest someone should steal her away, that he would never allow the pretty little princess to play outside the palace gates unless her brothers kept her company; and it was always a relief to his mind when the four royal children returned safely from their wanderings.

The young princes were always willing enough to take charge of their fair sister, of whose beauty they, also, were very proud; but Cadmus, the eldest, loved her most of all, and it was he whom the King held chiefly responsible for her safe-keeping.

One day, when Europa had grown into a lovely maiden, she went with her brothers to sport in some open pasture-ground quite close to the seashore; and finding that many rare flowers were growing amidst the long grasses there, the young princes began to make gay wreaths and long trails of blossoms with which to enhance the beauty of their fair sister.

In a short time Europa was nearly smothered with flowers; and then, with a merry laugh, she bade her brothers chase butterflies and leave her to rest in peace for a while. So the young princes ran off to follow the gorgeous butterflies that flitted here and there; and Europa lay down amongst the long grass, and lazily played with the garlands of sweet-scented flowers which she wore.

Now Jupiter, the mighty god of the heavens and King of Olympus, had seen and noted the great beauty of the young Princess Europa; and having a strong desire to possess her as one of his many beloved handmaidens, he had long waited for an opportunity to carry her away from her friends; and, at last, he knew that his chance had come, when he looked down from Olympus and saw the pretty maiden he longed for now resting in the grass by the seashore, practically alone and unprotected—her guardian brothers being all engaged in chasing butterflies at the other end of the meadow.

So the powerful god of thunder and lightning—who, as we have seen before, was not always noble and good, but frequently unkind and greedy in his desires—laid a cunning plan, and, by means of his magical gifts, changed himself into a beautiful white bull and drew near to the spot where the fair princess lay.

Europa had almost fallen asleep, when she heard a rustling in the grass behind her and the trampling of some creature approaching; and, springing hastily to her feet, she was greatly alarmed at the sight of the strange white bull so close to her.

However, the beautiful animal had such large tender-looking brown eyes, and appeared to be so gentle and harmless, that the maiden soon recovered from her first fright and began to make friends with him, patting his glossy white coat and stroking the curly hair on his forehead; and presently, feeling admiration for the handsome bull, she took off some of the wreaths and chains of flowers she wore and hung them over the gentle beast's shining horns and around his neck.

Then the bull began to frolic around the young princess, and knelt down on his knees before her, as though inviting her to take a ride upon his back; and presently Europa began to think that it would indeed be great fun to gallop across the field on the back of this new pet and astonish her brothers, who were still amusing themselves at the other end of the meadow.

Seeing that the maiden still hesitated, however, the bull came several times and knelt before her, and at last refused to rise up again; and when Europa saw what a pathetic look of pleading had come into his great soft, brown eyes, she could no longer resist the temptation to accept his most evident invitation. So, with a merry laugh, she seated herself lightly upon the back of the kneeling creature, playfully using the chain of flowers she had flung around his neck as reins; and instantly the white bull arose and began to trot across the meadow.

The young princes were amazed and greatly alarmed when they saw their sister approaching them mounted upon such a strange charger; but when Europa gaily waved her hand and called out a saucy greeting to them as she passed by, they were somewhat relieved.

Cadmus, however, still felt that all was not well, and, in haste, ran after his truant sister, wishing that he had never left her side; and at that moment the white bull suddenly began to gallop away swiftly towards the shore, and as the now-terrified prince followed in frantic haste, it plunged into the sea and swam swiftly through the waves.

In vain did poor Europa, now fully aware of her danger, call to her brother for help; for the white bull, bellowing with triumph, swam more swiftly still over the crested billows, and she was compelled to cling tightly to his horns to prevent herself from falling into the sea and being drowned. In a short time, they both vanished from the sight of the despairing Cadmus, never to return.

Thus did cunning Jupiter succeed in carrying off the beautiful Princess Europa to be his handmaiden and sweet companion in the far-distant island of Crete, where he afterwards landed; and when he had assumed the shape of a handsome young man, Europa was no longer sorrowful, but gladly returned the love he had to offer her

But the three young princes who had been left behind on the shores of Phœnicia were full of grief and consternation; and when they had at length found courage to return home and break the sad news to their royal parents, the latter were plunged into the deepest woe.

King Agenor also was filled with wrath against the young princes for having left their fair sister unprotected in the meadow, and in particular did he blame Cadmus, whom he thrust from his presence, crying passionately: "Go forth, faithless youth, destroyer of my happiness, and never dare to return to my presence again unless thou bringest back to me my beloved daughter, now lost to me through thy carelessness!"

Thus was the young Prince Cadmus driven from the palace of the father whom he had so deeply offended; and, full of despair at what had happened and grieving sorely for the loss of the beautiful sister whom he had loved so well, the wretched youth wandered forth, not knowing which way to turn.

For many years Cadmus wandered hither and thither, in first one country and then in another; but nowhere could he learn any tidings of his lost sister—and since he dared not return home without her, he knew that he was fated to be an exile all his life.

At last, however, the good goddess Minerva took pity upon him, seeing that he was a bold and splendid young man and not afraid to face any danger that might come in his way; and she caused him to turn his steps towards Mount Parnassus, not far from which lay the city of Delphi, where a famous oracle—a mysterious hidden voice which uttered words of wisdom and prophecy from the god Apollo—was to be heard in the great temple there.

When Cadmus entered the temple to pray for guidance in his now-hopeless search, the voice of the oracle replied clearly: "Seek no more for thy lost one, oh Cadmus, for she is happy and will never return to thee."

"But what, then, shall I do, oh great Apollo, since my home also is lost to me?" still prayed the kneeling prince; and the mysterious voice replied: "Go forth with hope, oh Cadmus, and follow the first brindled cow thou meetest; and in the spot where the cow lieth down, there build thou a great city, and win renown as its king."

Greatly cheered, though somewhat mystified by these commands, Cadmus once more set forth upon his wanderings; and, after a while, he did indeed observe a brindled cow moving before him—and he determined to follow it, as he had been bidden.

For many days he followed the brindled cow; and as his story became known, some idlers whom he met by the wayside joined him, curious to see what would happen.

At last, after a weary journey, the cow could go no farther, and so lay down in a lonely place to rest; and the idlers ran down to a neighbouring well to get water to quench their thirst.

Cadmus was about to follow them when, hearing loud shrieks of terror, he was just in time to see an enormous dragon rush out from a rocky den behind the well and swallow up all his companions, one after the other.

Having no desire to meet with a similar fate, Cadmus hastily drew the mighty sword he wore; and when the monster rushed towards him, gnashing its terrible teeth and shaking the earth with its heavy scaly body, the prince boldly jumped inside its huge mouth, so that its teeth could not close over him.

Once inside the jaws of the dragon, Cadmus aimed many fierce blows at its throat with his sword; and at last the great beast rolled over, dead, and the victorious hero sprang out of its jaws in safety.

He was just wondering how he could possibly build a city in that lonely spot with no one to help him, when the voice of Minerva came to him again: "Take out the dragon's teeth, oh Cadmus, and sow them in the ground."

So Cadmus drew out the teeth of the dead dragon, and planted them in the ground not far away; and then, to his amazement, there grew up instantly a crop of armed men, all ready for battle.

Minerva now bade Cadmus throw a stone in amongst the strange crop he had raised; and as soon as he had done so, the armed men began to quarrel fiercely amongst themselves and to fight so desperate a battle that all were killed save five.

The five remaining warriors next drew near to render homage to Cadmus as their leader, who commanded them to assist him to build a city in that spot; and when they had performed this task, the builders became the first inhabitants of the city, and Cadmus became their king.

The city was called Thebes; and as the years went on many people came to dwell in it, and Cadmus and his people gained great renown and glory, keeping enemies away and growing skilful in the gentle arts of peace. Cadmus is said to have invented sixteen letters of the Greek alphabet, and to have taught his people the arts of writing in prose and of working in copper, and to do many other useful things.

For many years Cadmus still grieved for his lost sister Europa; but in order to comfort him the gods sent to him one of the dwellers in Olympus to be his bride—Harmonia, the daughter of Mars, the god of war, and of Venus, the goddess of love and beauty. On the wedding day all the gods of Olympus came to join in the festivities; and after this great event Cadmus forgot his grief, and lived happily to the end of his days with his beautiful wife.

Orpheus and his Lyre

What a wonderful power music has over all, young and old alike! It can fill our hearts with noble thoughts; it can make us see in our minds more beautiful pictures than any that have been painted on canvas; it can make us gay or sad.

Throughout all the centuries that have gone by music has brought joy into the world; and in the stories of the ancient Greeks and Romans, we read that some of the makers of sweet music had more power over the people than even the richest and mightiest of kings and queens.

In the very earliest times there were only two kinds of musical instruments—the flute, or pipe, and the first simple harp, or lyre as it was then called; and some very charming tales used to be told as to how these two instruments came to be invented.

The lyre was first made, quite accidentally, by Mercury, who was the cleverest, the swiftest-footed, and the most cunning of all the gods, and who was known as the messenger of the gods; and the old fable states that he made it as a plaything when still only quite a baby.

We are told that the baby Mercury was playing about on the seashore one day when he happened to find the empty top shell of a tortoise; and, taking this up, he carelessly began to fasten across it some threads of sinews, or of gut, which he had with him, to make strings of various lengths.

Then he idly began to pull the strings with his little chubby fingers, and found, to his great surprise and delight, that they made the sound of sweet music. This was a wonderful discovery; and after pulling the strings for a short time, the happy child was able to make up pretty tunes and to sing songs to them.

You may be sure that young Mercury felt very proud of himself when he first went about amongst his friends and played merry airs to them upon the new toy he had been clever enough to make; and crowds of strangers came to listen to him, and to marvel at the strains of sweet music he drew from the strings stretched across merely a common tortoise shell.

It was not long before this delightful new musical toy was heard of by the glorious god, Apollo, who bought it from Mercury; for Mercury was also the god of commerce and gain, and this was his first little bit of trading.

And now the noble art of music began to grow quickly and became more greatly admired than ever before. For Apollo, who, besides being a person of such dazzling beauty that he was called the "sun-god", was also the god of art, so that everything that was beautiful was sacred to him; and above all the other arts, he dearly loved sweet music and singing.

So when Apollo had bought the lyre made by the baby Mercury, he quickly learned to play upon it and to compose finer music than had ever been heard before; and his fame as the god of art and music became greater still.

After a while Apollo greatly improved his new treasure, and then secured more empty tortoise shells which he made into other rough instruments, so that, later on, many people regarded him as the actual inventor of the harp; and by and by many other lovers of music amongst the Greeks also became good players upon the lyre and gained much praise.

The most famous of all the heroes of music was Orpheus, who was also a poet, and who lived in the land of Thrace. It was believed by some that Apollo himself was his father, though he is more generally supposed to have been the son of Œagrus, King of Thrace, whilst his mother was Calliope, the goddess and muse of epic poetry.

Never before had such music even been dreamt of as that composed by Orpheus; and his wonderful playing of the lyre to the accompaniment of his glorious voice was quite magical.

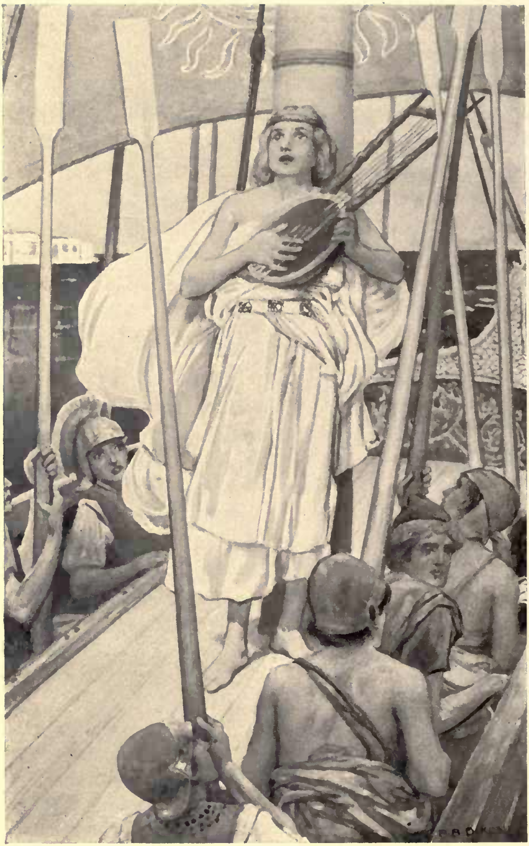
When Orpheus took up his lyre and began to touch its strings with his loving touch and to sing to the sweet melodies that he composed the beautiful poetry that came into his mind, all nature seemed to draw nigh unto him.

His magic music waked the sleeping earth from her winter rest, so that the fair flowers left their dark cradles to open their dewy buds in the bright spring sunshine; the forest trees uprooted themselves to leap on high and to toss their branches in the merry breeze; and the very rocks and hills began to dance!

Such harmonious sounds calmed the wildest tempests and caused the tossing waves of the ocean to run smoothly once more; and evil thoughts in the heart of man were transformed to thoughts of love and kindness.

Even the fiercest of wild beasts became tame and gentle, and would draw near to lick the player's feet or to follow him about like harmless lambs; and it was no strange thing for a savage lion or a deadly serpent to join company with the fair maidens and happy children who came to listen to the wonderful music of Orpheus. As for the birds, they put their dainty heads on one side and learned afresh how to sing, whilst the babbling brooks ran more merrily over the pebbles; and all the songsters and music-makers in nature joined in to make a perfect chorus of harmonious melody when this sweet singer, with his magic touch, struck the lyre.

Thus Orpheus became the master musician and most glorious singer of the world; and when there was danger of evil, he was often sent for in haste to drive it away by means of his wonder-



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ORPHEUS WITH THE ARGONAUTS

ful gift of song. When the famous hero, Jason, set forth with his brave company of Argonauts upon the quest of the Golden Fleece, he took Orpheus with him in his vessel; and many times the strains of beautiful music made by this sweet singer calmed the most fearful tempests and kept away many a threatened evil, thus saving the bold heroes from great dangers which they would not otherwise have escaped.

Yet, strange to say, this master musician, though he brought joy and peace to others, could not save himself from great woe.

Orpheus had a beautiful wife whose name was Eurydice and whom he loved so dearly that he could scarcely bear to have her out of his sight; for he always felt that some harm might come to her when he was not there to keep away evil by means of his magic music.

And what he feared indeed came to pass; for one day, during his absence, when Eurydice went forth alone into the woods to gather flowers, a sad misfortune happened to her. She was very happy as she filled her arms with tall bluebells, shy, drooping anemones and other fair spring flowers; and presently she sat down beneath an ancient oak tree to rest for a while and to weave a garland of blossoms to twine amongst her long flowing tresses of sunny hair. Then, noticing a specially beautiful tall bluebell growing close beside her, she stretched out her hand to pluck it;

but quickly she drew it back, as she felt a sharp stinging pain. She had been bitten by a serpent hidden in the grass; and the poison from its cruel fangs caused her to droop and die.

When Orpheus returned and was told the sad news, he was bowed down with grief for the loss of his fair and well-beloved wife; and feeling that he could not live without her, he determined to follow her to Hades, the under-world, where the Greeks believed their loved ones dwelt after death.

This was a fearful journey to make, full of dangers and terrible sights; but Orpheus took his lyre with him and set forth bravely, and the magic music he made not only brought him safely through every danger, but caused many unhappy spirits on the borders of Tartarus to be grateful for his coming, since such sweet sounds even caused their eternal torments to be stayed for the time being.

When at last the bereaved musician came into the Land of the Shades and found himself in the presence of Pluto, the god-king of the under-world—who sat upon his ebony throne with his fair Queen, Proserpina, beside him—and begged to be allowed to take back with him his beloved Eurydice to the earth once more, his request was at first refused; but when Orpheus then took up his lyre and despairingly poured forth all his woe into a marvellous song of passionate entreaty, Pluto's heart was softened by the magical music he heard, and feeling great pity for the unhappy husband, he at length gave his consent and said that Orpheus might take back his wife to the upper world as a special favour and as a reward for the dangers he had braved, and also because of the sweet melodies with which he had flooded the palace of the dark King.

But on one condition only was he to be allowed to take back Eurydice to the upper world—that he did not even once turn to look back upon her as she followed him to the earth, for, if he did so, then she would be snatched back instantly to the Land of Shades, there to dwell for ever.

Full of joy that his beautiful wife was to be restored to him and that happy days were yet in store for them both, Orpheus set forth upon his return journey, with the fair Eurydice following him with eager steps and with gladness in her heart; and the strains of his lyre were now sweeter than any he had ever struck before.

But, alas, poor Orpheus! So great was his joy, and so eager was he to make sure that his beloved one was indeed following him, that, unhappily, he forgot the command of Pluto, and, just as he drew near to the upper world once more, he looked back upon her over his shoulder—and instantly the beautiful Eurydice was seized by unseen hands and snatched back to the Land of Shades, to dwell in the under-world for ever.

This second loss of his fair wife quite broke the heart of the master musician; and he vowed that he would never again look upon the face of a maiden. This vow so enraged the women of Thrace, many of whom had long loved him in vain, that it is said they tore him in pieces in one of their wild festivals in honour of Bacchus, the god of wine; but even as he died, the thought of his beloved lost one was still with the faithful Orpheus, whose last word as he expired was "Eurydice".

The Story of Phrixus and Helle

When Athamas, King of Orchomenus in Bœotia, deserted his good wife, Nephele, and married Ino, the Princess of Thebes, many troubles fell upon his two children, the young Prince Phrixus and the little Princess Helle; for the new Queen, Ino, was very jealous of the King's love for these fair children, and so treated them with great unkindness.

At length she even found an excuse for commanding that her hated step-children should be offered up as a special sacrifice to the gods in honour of a certain festival; and the weak King Athamas, not caring to thwart his new Queen's jealous desire, permitted preparations for this cruel offering to be made.

The deserted Nephele, however, hearing of the terrible fate that awaited her beloved children, prayed passionately to the gods for help in this dire necessity; and since the gods did not desire the two royal children to be sacrificed to them, they sent Mercury, their swift messenger —a beautiful young god who wore winged sandals upon his feet and a winged cap upon his head, so that, as he sped along at lightning rate, he scarcely touched the ground, and could even skim over the crest of the ocean waves without wetting his feet —to prevent the cruel deed from being done.

Mercury caused a golden-fleeced ram suddenly to appear beside the young prince and princess as they stood, hand in hand, waiting for the priests to bind them to the altar-stone; and seeing the beautiful creature making strange signs to them, Phrixus, with the assistance of the weeping Nephele—who, despairing of the success of her appeal to the gods, had come to see the last of her beloved children—quickly mounted upon its back, and pulled up his little sister beside him.

Instantly the golden ram mounted into the air; and the young prince and the little princess were thus swiftly borne away in a flash of brilliant golden light from the hands of the unnatural people who had wished to sacrifice them.

Over the land and sea they sped, clinging tightly to the golden fleece of the magic ram; but, unhappily, the little Princess Helle grew afraid as they were crossing over the Straits of Pontus, and, in her terror, loosed hold of her protector, and thus fell into the sea below and was drowned. In after years the spot where she fell was called the "Hellespont", in memory of her; and this same strait is now known as the Dardanelles.

Prince Phrixus, however, was a strong, bold youth, and he clung fearlessly and with great firmness to the magic creature he rode upon until at last he arrived in the land of Colchis, where he was permitted to dwell in safety.

Upon arriving in Colchis, the young prince offered up the magic ram as a sacrifice to the gods, in thanksgiving to them for having sent it to save his life; but he first carefully removed its beautiful golden fleece and gave it to the King of Colchis, who hung it upon an ancient oak tree in a woodland place known as the Grove of Mars, where it shone forth in a dazzling blaze of light which glowed like the rays of the sun.

Phrixus now remained in Colchis, where he lived in peace for many years; and, later on, he was married to a fair princess, and had two brave sons.

Aetes, King of Colchis, was so pleased at having the marvellous new treasure brought into his land by Phrixus that he liked to think it belonged to himself alone; but the gods soon let it become known that the beautiful golden fleece—which was of divine origin—was to hang up in the Grove of Mars only until a great hero should be found brave enough to take it hence.

In order that their decree should be observed, the gods sent a terrible fiery dragon to live at the foot of the oak tree in the Grove of Mars to guard the wonderful treasure; and it became the mightiest deed of valour that the great heroes of Greece could take upon themselves to set forth upon the quest of the Golden Fleece.

For Colchis was a far-distant, wild country, famed as the abode of magicians, and the way to it was so full of terrible dangers that many brave men lost their lives on the journey; but at last there came one mighty hero who was bolder and had better luck than any of the others who had gone before him, so that he suceeded in the great enterprise. This hero was the famous Jason, whose strange adventures we shall follow in the next story.

How Jason took the Golden Fleece

Aeson, King of Iolcus in Thessaly, upon becoming somewhat enfeebled by age, resigned the throne in favour of his little son, Jason, appointing his brother, Pelias, to rule the kingdom until the child should come of age; but Pelias, being of a tyrannical and grasping nature, soon found means to snatch the throne for himself and was crowned as king.

Not satisfied with this evil deed, Pelias next attempted to take the life of the true heir; but, fortunately, old Aeson was able to save his son from this sad fate. Then, feeling that it was not safe for the young prince to remain in that troubled land for the time being, the unhappy King determined to take Jason away to be brought up by old Chiron, who was a famous teacher of the heroes of old, and who was a Centaur—that is to say, the top half of his body, from his head to his middle, was that of a man, and the lower half of him was that of a horse.

Chiron lived in a large cave, where he had a great number of pupils, many of whom afterwards became renowned as mighty heroes; and so the old King Aeson took his little son by the hand, and, with a very heavy heart, journeyed to the abode of this strange but famous teacher, who received them with great kindness, and promised to take charge of young Jason until he was old enough to return to Iolchus to claim his stolen kingdom.

When the old King had departed, after a sad parting with his beloved child, Jason soon made friends with his fellow pupils and companions, who gave him a glad welcome; and he felt proud to be the playmates of such fine youths, amongst whom were Achilles, who afterwards became famous as the great hero of the Trojan War, and Hercules, who grew up to be the strongest man in the world as well as one of the boldest heroes of ancient times.

Old Chiron himself, though a strict teacher, was pleasant to look upon, and had a kindly, gentle nature; and he taught the fair youths in his charge not only how to use all kinds of weapons of defence, and to be fearless in battle and skilful in manly sports, but also how to use their brains wisely, to love noble deeds, to be faithful and true, gentle with the weak, and kind to all. He trained them to have faith in themselves and their own powers, so that they should never be afraid to attempt any difficult enterprise; and he loved to gather the boys around him when their tasks for the day were done, and to sing to them and to tell them stories of the splendid heroes of the past, so that they should learn to honour the mighty dead and have the desire to emulate their great deeds.

Thus did the young Prince Jason receive the training of a hero; and when he had grown up to be a splendid youth, strong and beautiful to look upon, with clever wits, a ready arm, and a true hero's heart, he longed to meet with adventures.

Feeling that he was now ready to battle with the world, he determined to journey to the land of his birth once more and to claim from his tyrant uncle, Pelias, the throne which it was his right to sit upon; and so he bade farewell to his kind teacher and beloved companions with sincere regret, and set forth upon his travels.

Over his shoulders a leopard's skin was flung as a cloak; and upon his feet he wore a pair of rich golden sandals which had been a parting gift to him from his royal father, who was now dead.

As he sped lightly upon his journey with a joyous heart, young Jason felt ready for any adventures that might come his way; and he had not long to wait for the latter.

As he drew near to a certain broad stream in which the water, swollen by the spring floods, flowed in a rushing torrent, the youth noticed upon the bank a strange old dame, who leaned heavily upon a tall staff, the top of which was carved into the shape of a cuckoo, and who was followed by a couple of handsome peacocks. In spite of her aged and bent appearance, however, the old dame had a certain air of majesty and dignity about her; and, to the surprise of Jason, she addressed him by his name as though already acquainted with him, and begged him to carry her across the stream, since she was too feeble with age to brave the swirling torrent upon her own feet.

Jason had a kindly heart, and had been taught by old Chiron the Centaur that gentleness and reverence to the aged and to children was one of the first qualities of true nobility; and though he had no desire to thus burden himself whilst crossing the angry stream, he willingly agreed to carry the dame over the water, and bade her mount upon his back.

The old woman immediately did so, her example being followed by the two peacocks, who perched one on each of her shoulders, since they also desired to take advantage of the kindly services of the youth; and then Jason stepped boldly into the stream and carried his unexpected burden safely to the opposite bank, losing one of his golden sandals as he trod amongst the rough pebbles, a fact he scarcely heeded, owing to his surprise at noting that the weight he bore seemed to grow less with every step he took.

He soon knew the reason for this, and that magic had been at work; for directly he stepped out of the water, to his utter amazement the old dame suddenly vanished, and in her place stood the beautiful goddess Juno, the glorious Queen of Olympus, in all her dazzling majesty, and still attended by the stately peacocks—these royal birds being sacred to her, as well as the cuckoo, an image of which bird was carved upon the top of her staff.

"Noble youth," said Juno, as Jason knelt humbly before her, with bowed head, overcome with awe, "in the shape of an old and feeble dame I tried thy heart, and found it good and kind, and not selfish as are the hearts of many other youths whom I have thus visited; and I now bid thee go forth into the world and perform the mighty deeds of a hero, suffering all and fearing naught, for my blessing shall rest upon thee wherever thou shalt roam, and thou shalt succeed in the difficult task which presently will be given thee to do. Fare thee well, Jason, and keep hope in thine heart always, since Juno smiles upon thee."

With these gracious words, the lovely Queen of Olympus mounted into a golden chariot which had now appeared, and which was drawn by her two attendant peacocks; and in a few seconds she had vanished out of sight, leaving Jason to proceed upon his way, full of hope and joy.

When the young prince at length arrived in Iolcus, the land of his birth, he found that a great festival was being held, and that his grasping uncle, Pelias, was about to sacrifice a black bull in honour of the event; but upon Jason suddenly appearing before him, the usurper dropped the sacrificial knife and turned pale as he gazed upon the stranger and noted that he wore but one golden sandal. Years ago a soothsayer had bidden the tyrant King to beware the coming of a royal youth who would one day appear before him wearing a single golden sandal, whom he would know to be the nephew whom he had wronged and who would come prepared to claim his stolen throne.

Though full of anger that the young prince had indeed appeared in accordance with the prophecy to claim his rights, the greedy King quickly thought out a cunning plan to rid himself of his unwelcome nephew, who he saw at once was of the stuff of which heroes are made: and greeting him calmly as his kinsman, he spoke thus in reply to the young man's stern request:

"I have held this kingdom for many years, nephew Jason; but I will give up the throne to thee upon one condition only—that, first of all, thou settest forth upon the noble Quest of the Golden Fleece; and if, upon thy return, thou bringest back with thee that mighty treasure, thou shalt certainly reign in my stead."

You will remember reading in the story of "Phrixus and Helle" what the Golden Fleece was, how it came to be set up in the Grove of Mars in Colchis, and how, because of the many terrible dangers that had to be overcome before anyone could hope to take away the prize, only the very bravest heroes ever ventured to set forth upon the quest; and, therefore, it was no wonder that Jason was astonished that he, a mere stripling, should be asked to perform a task that even the mightiest heroes of Greece had so far failed to achieve, though he did not so much as turn pale as the cunning King added:

"Thou art a fine, strong youth, with a stout heart, and art well fitted for this great task; and one of royal birth should not refuse to undertake the greatest of hero deeds when commanded to do so."

"Nor do I refuse!" cried Jason proudly. "I am no craven, and am not afraid of any task that may be set me; and I will go forth willingly upon the Quest of the Golden Fleece; what is more, I will never return hither without it."

The artful Pelias now became more friendly and amiable, since he felt convinced that the royal youth would never even reach Colchis alive, much less come back with the famous Golden Fleece; and therefore he allowed his bold nephew to seek any assistance he desired in making his plans for the journey.

Jason was eager for adventures and full of hope; and he went without delay to seek advice from the Oracle oak-grove situated in a certain woodland district known as Dodona. The spirit that dwelt within these ancient oaks (some say that it was the spirit of the mighty Jupiter himself who spoke the words of prophecy to be heard there), always eager to encourage the heroes who sought its aid, told him to have a great ship built for him, with oars for fifty rowers; and, when it was ready, he was to man the vessel with fellow heroes, and also to take with him Orpheus, the master singer of the world, whose magic playing upon the lyre would lessen the dangers he was bound to meet upon the way.

Jason thanked the wise spirit for its excellent advice, and forthwith consulted the famous shipbuilder, Argus, and commanded him to build a fine vessel, which was to be named the *Argo* in honour of the builder. Many bold youths and heroes gave assistance in the building of the *Argo*; and upon Jason's second visit to the wise Oracle of Dodona, one of the branches of an ancient tree bowed down before the youth and said: "Oh, cut me off, royal Jason, that I may become the figurehead of thy vessel and guide thee with good advice upon thy journey."

Jason thereupon cut off the branch and took it to a famous sculptor to be cut into a figurehead; and when the work was completed, all were amazed at the beauty of the woman's head which had been carved by the artist, whose hand appeared to have been guided by magic.

And now Jason no longer needed to go to the Dodona Oracle for advice; for he discovered that the same spirit also dwelt in the beautiful figurehead of his vessel, which, in future, he could consult when in doubt or difficulty.

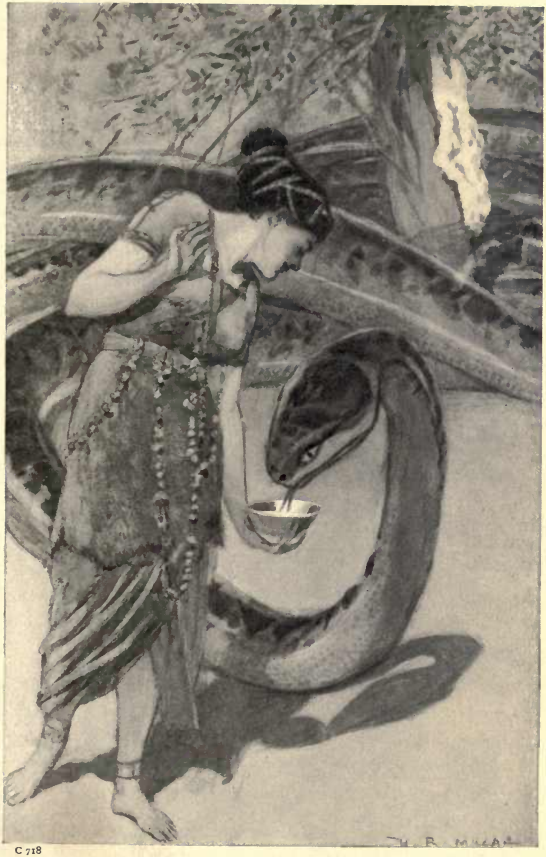
When the noble vessel was at length ready, Jason had no need to seek or ask for companions;

for forty-nine of the bravest and most famous heroes of his time—amongst whom were Hercules, Theseus, Ajax and others—came forward as volunteers, and, willingly offering their services to the royal youth, took their places at the oars at once.

Next there came Orpheus, the wonderful singer and poet (of whom we read in the story of "Orpheus and Eurydice"), with his magic lyre, and sat at the helm beside Jason; and then the bold company—who were now known as the "Argonauts"—set forth upon the Quest of the Golden Fleece.

Many were the exciting and terrifying adventures they met with upon their journey; and had it not been that the blessing of Juno, the Queen of Olympus, rested upon Jason, and that Orpheus was present with his magic music to calm the wind and the waves, they would never have succeeded in overcoming the troubles and dangers that came in their way.

More than once, when fearful storms were raging and they were expecting every moment to be dashed to pieces on the rocks, Orpheus struck his lyre, and, by means of his sweet singing, made the rough angry waters smooth once more. Once, also, when they were in terrible danger in a wild place known as the Blue Rocks, the goddess Juno sent a heron to guide them, so that by following the royal bird, they were able to navigate the passage safely.



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MEDEA GIVES THE MAGIC POWDER TO THE DRAGON

They often stopped at various ports and islands they came to upon their way; and in one of these strange lands they fought with a host of terrible giants who had long troubled the people in those parts, and destroyed them all by means of their great strength and skill with the bow and arrows.

On another island they were attacked by a flock of huge, fierce eagles known as the Stymphalides, all of whom were said to have feathers of bronze which they shot out and sent down upon the heroes with great force; but Jason quickly sought advice from the magic figurehead of his ship, and was told to command his companions to make a fearful clatter with their swords and shields—and the amazing noise thus made scared away the ravenous birds which otherwise would certainly have devoured them.

After many more strange adventures of this kind, the *Argo* at last arrived on the shores of Colchis; and leaving his friends to guard the ship, Jason landed alone and fearlessly made his way to the royal palace, where he requested the King to permit him to enter the Grove of Mars and attempt to carry off the Golden Fleece.

Now, King Æetes of Colchis was not pleased when he found that a hero had at last braved and overcome all the dangers of the long and difficult journey to his land; and he soon began to feel afraid that this bold youth—who seemed to be afraid of nothing—might even manage to snatch away the great treasure in the Grove of Mars, in spite of the fact that it was guarded day and night by a terrible dragon which he himself had never dared to go within sight of, much less attempted to fight with.

So, hoping to persuade Jason to return to his ship without even attempting the great task that awaited him in the Grove of Mars, he said to him: "Before I can allow thee to enter the sacred Grove of Mars, first of all thou must tame two fierce brazen-footed bulls which breathe forth fiery flames, and which roam loose in a field at night; and not only this, but shouldst thou succeed in taming these wild beasts, thou must yoke them and plough the field, and then sow in it some magic dragon's teeth, from which will spring forth a vast crop of armed men, all of whom thou must overcome by morning. And then, after this, thou wilt have to slay the terrible dragon in the Grove of Mars, ere thou canst carry off the Golden Fleece. Therefore, take my advice, rash youth, and return to thy vessel; for thou wilt certainly die if thou art so foolish as to attempt these impossible tasks."

But Jason declared all the more stoutly that he would not give up the quest of the Golden Fleece, no matter what dangers might come in his way; and he went out of the palace trying to think of a means to carry out the heavy tasks that had been set him, which, in spite of his bold resolve, he knew were really impossible to be done by ordinary means.

Yet, assistance was at hand, and Juno's gracious blessing was still upon him; for the daughter of the King of Colchis, the beautiful Princess Medea, had fallen in love with this royal hero directly she set eyes upon him, and she had already made up her mind to help him in his quest.

Medea was a sorceress and a dealer in marvellous magic, and she was clever enough to know that her gifts were of value in the present case; so she ran after Jason as he walked gloomily from the palace, and offered to help him in his tasks if he would love her and become her husband.

And the young hero had no sooner looked upon the fair princess than he loved her as she desired; and he said to her: "If thou wilt help me to take the Golden Fleece, royal maiden, thou shalt go away with me to my own land to be my queen."

Then Medea gave the youth a box of magic paste, which she told him to smear all over his body and garments, since it would prevent the flames from the fiery bulls from harming him; and Jason gladly did as she bade him.

Then, in the dead of night, Medea came to him again and led him to the large open field where the fiery bulls were already roaming loose; and next moment the terrible beasts were charging him, breathing forth long streams of scorching flames and endeavouring to trample him to death with their heavy brazen feet.

The strange paste which Jason had smeared over his garments and the exposed parts of his body prevented the flames from burning him; and not stopping even to draw his sword, the bold youth instantly seized both the raging bulls by their horns in such a mighty grasp that they knew him at once to be their master, and thus became quite tame and were prepared to obey him. Seeing this, Jason yoked the beasts to a plough close by and made them work hard and quickly, so that, in a very short time, the field was ploughed.

Then Medea brought forth a bag filled with magic dragon's teeth (they were, in fact, the remainder of the teeth of the terrible dragon slain by Cadmus, whose adventures are related in the story of "Europa and Cadmus"); and Jason sowed the field with them. As soon as he had planted the last of these strange seeds, there sprang up a thick crop of armed men, who made a furious rush upon the watchful and intrepid youth; but, following the command of the clever Princess Medea, Jason promptly flung his helmet into the midst of the amazing crop he had raised.

Instantly, the warriors began to fight amongst themselves, each one thinking that his neighbour had thrown the helmet at him alone; and so fiercely did the battle rage, that by the time dawn appeared all the armed men lay dead upon the field.

When the King of Colchis knew that Jason had actually performed the tasks that had been set him, he was furious with rage and disappointment; and suspecting that his witch daughter must have assisted the young hero, he commanded Medea to compel Jason to sail away in his ship immediately, since, otherwise, he and she should be slain.

But, instead of following out this command, the royal maiden quickly led Jason into the Grove of Mars, where, after walking some distance, they saw the dazzling light shining forth from the wonderful Golden Fleece, which was hanging upon the trunk of an old oak tree, around which an enormous dragon lay coiled, fast asleep.

Their approaching steps awakened the monster, which turned fiercely upon them at once; but just as it opened its huge jaws, intending to swallow them both at a gulp, Medea opened a golden box she had brought with her and flung its contents of magic powder down the raging beast's throat.

This powder caused the dragon instantly to sink back to the ground in a heavy slumber; and as the sound of its loud snores began to shake the earth, the princess bade Jason seize the Golden Fleece at once, without further delay. In order to do this, the young hero was actually compelled to step upon the dragon's scaly back, since its long snaky body was wound round the base of the tree; but he gathered his courage together, and did the deed.

Then when Jason had torn off the beautiful Golden Fleece from the oak tree, he and Medea hastened away to the shore, hand in hand, with utmost speed, and boarded the *Argo* without a moment's delay.

Then with a mighty shout from all the fifty heroes, and to the sound of Orpheus's lyre, the Argonauts set forth upon their return journey, bearing the beautiful Golden Fleece with them; and though the King of Colchis followed them for a long distance, full of rage because the magic treasure and his witch daughter had been taken away from his land, he could not overtake the bold adventurers, and was obliged to return to his palace alone.

Many more adventures and terrible dangers came to the brave Argonauts, and many more years passed away before they arrived at their journey's end; but at last they came safely to Iolcus, the land of Jason's birth. Here the young prince was at once made king, with the beautiful Princess Medea as his queen; for the grasping Pelias was soon driven out by the people whom he had ruled so tyrannically, and who gave a joyous welcome to the brave hero who had gained such world-wide glory by succeeding in the wonderful Quest of the Golden Fleece.

Perseus the Gorgon Slayer

One of the greatest heroes we read about in the Greek wonder tales is Perseus, who did many brave deeds and was beloved and helped by the gods.

The adventures of Perseus began when he was still a baby. He was the son of a beautiful princess named Danae, and his father was the great god, Jupiter. When but a few weeks old, he and his mother were sealed up in a great chest and cast into the sea; this cruel deed being done by the command of Danae's father, King Acrisius of Argos, who, having been told by a soothsayer that he would meet his death at the hands of his grandson, hoped thus to rid himself of the child for ever.

Acrisius had first of all endeavoured to prevent his daughter from marrying, and to exclude her from the sight of all likely suitors by imprisoning her in a brazen tower; but his selfish scheme failed, since bolts and bars were nothing to the mighty Jupiter, who visited the fair captive in her prison, appearing before her suddenly in the form of a shower of gold. Thus, in spite of the precautions taken, Danae was seen and beloved by the great King of Olympus; and their son, Perseus, was preserved for the career of a glorious hero.

For the gods did not intend Danae and her child to perish when so cruelly cast into the sea, and by their miraculous intervention, they caused the waves to cast up the chest upon the shores of the island of Seriphos, where it was found by a kindly fisherman named Dictys.

When Dictys saw the distressed lady and her fair babe still alive in the chest, he took them both to his humble home, and gave them food and shelter; and when he had heard the story told by the unhappy Princess Danae, he was filled with pity, and said: "Weep not, fair Princess, for thou shalt dwell here in safety, and be as a daughter unto my wife and me; and the little Perseus shall be brought up with all the loving care I would have bestowed upon a son of my own."

So Danae and her son lived for fifteen happy years with good Dictys and his wife: and Perseus grew up to be a brave and noble youth, who was taller and handsomer to look upon and more skilful in every manly sport than any other young man in the land.

Now, although Dictys lived the simple life of a fisherman, his brother, Polydectes, was King of the island of Seriphos, which, in his greed, he had snatched and kept for his own alone; and this King Polydectes was very fond of holding feasts, to which all the gay young lords and fighting youths of the land were invited, each guest always being expected to bring a gift with him for the avaricious King.

Perseus, as soon as he had grown up to be a splendid youth and had gained considerable renown by his skill in games and the use of arms, was commanded by the King to attend one of the royal feasts; but, as he was but a portionless youth and possessed no riches, he could not afford to take a gift with him.

The gay young lords, who were jealous of this noble youth because he had recently excelled them all in their national games and warlike sports, now pointed their fingers at him in scorn, because he had not brought a gift to the banquet; and the King received him with disdain, for the same reason.

Then Perseus, full of shame because he had been compelled to come to the palace empty-handed, cried out boldly: "Though I have not the means to bring thee rich gifts as these lords have done, oh King, yet will I go forth and fetch back to thee a greater gift than any thou hast ever received before—the head of Medusa, the Gorgon!"

I must tell you that there were living at that time three terrible monsters known as the Gorgons, having the faces of women but the bodies of winged dragons, with brazen feet and claws and such strange hard eyes that all persons who looked upon them were turned to stone; and the most hideous of these monsters was named Medusa, whose head was covered with hissing serpents instead of with hair and who was the terror of the world—but who was, nevertheless, the only one of the three monsters who was mortal and could be slain.

When Polydectes heard the rash promise of Perseus to slay the Gorgon, Medusa, he held him fast to his word; and being very eager to rid himself of the youth, of whom he also was jealous, he said harshly and with scorn in his voice: "Go forth, then, ye boaster, and fetch me hither the head of Medusa, for I will accept none other gift from thee; and if thou shalt dare to return hither without it, thou shalt surely be slain!"

Then Perseus went forth from the palace to set about the great task he had declared he would perform; and because he was brave and hopeful, the gods helped him in many ways.

First of all, Minerva, the goddess of wisdom, came before him in her dazzling beauty and lent him her own shield, which was polished like a mirror, telling him that in this he could see where to strike at Medusa without needing to look upon her actual face, and thus prevent himself from being turned to stone by her petrifying eyes, Then Mercury, the messenger of the gods, lent him his winged sandals and cap, as well as his magic sword which always dealt death at the first blow; and the Hesperides, or daughters of Hesperus, the Evening Star, borrowed for him the magic helmet of Pluto, King of the Under-world, which made the wearer invisible for so long as he wore it; and from other gods and nymphs he learned which paths to take when he set forth upon his journey.

After long and weary wanderings, Perseus at length arrived in the dismal land of the Gorgons, all three of whom were asleep as he drew near to them.

He knew that he must not look upon the eyes of these terrible monsters, or he would be transformed to stone; but he saw the picture of Medusa in the bright shield lent him by the goddess Minerva, and he shuddered at the sight of the fierce hissing serpents upon her head, at her dragon's scaly body, and her fearful brazen feet and claws.

A less-noble youth would have fled at once at such a terrifying sight; but Perseus had a brave heart, and, still keeping his eyes fixed upon the picture in the mirror-shield, he drew closer and aimed one mighty blow at the sleeping Medusa, which struck off her head, so that the fierce Gorgon rolled over, dead. From the drops of blood which fell from the severed head of Medusa, there sprang forth instantly a beautiful winged horse, afterwards named Pegasus, which immediately flew out of sight, and met with strange adventures later on.

Still keeping his eyes fixed upon the picture in the shield, Perseus quickly wrapped up the fallen head in a goatskin he had brought with him for the purpose, and hurried away from the spot; and though the other two Gorgons now awakened and rushed wildly and with fearful cries after the slayer of Medusa, they could not find him, since the magic helmet he wore hid him from their sight, and also prevented their stony glances from falling upon him.

Thus did Perseus escape from a great danger; and, with the Gorgon's head carefully hidden in the goatskin beneath his arm, he set off upon his return journey.

As he passed through the land of Æthiopia, he observed that the country had been laid waste by an enemy, and that floods and fires in addition had made it dismal to behold; and, consequently, he took to the sea, and skimmed lightly over the crests of the waves by means of the winged sandals he wore.

Then, to his surprise and horror, he saw, not very far from the shore, a great black rock, to which a most beautiful maiden was bound with chains; and, full of fierce anger that such a cruel deed should have been done, Perseus hurried to the maiden's side, broke off her chains and set her free.

He then removed his magic helmet; and when the grateful maiden beheld her rescuer, she told him her name was Andromeda, Princess of the Æthiopians, and that she had lived a very happy life until the Queen, her mother, had boasted one day that her daughter Andromeda was the most beautiful maiden in the world. This foolish boast had made the lovely nereids, or sea nymphs, so angry that they persuaded Neptune, King of the Sea, to send great floods to waste the land of the Æthiops, and had commanded the Fire-King to burn the houses of the people; and, not content with this, they had also sent a sea monster to roam the shores and to devour all the people who came in its way.

At last it was found that the only way to stop these woes was to give up the Princess Andromeda herself to the terrible sea monster, which would then be satisfied and return to the depths of the ocean once more; and, therefore, the lovely maiden had been taken out and chained to the black rock and left there, with the waves raging about her, ready for the monster to devour when next he should come that way.

"Oh see, here he comes!" suddenly cried the royal maiden, pointing to a fearful snaky creature that was even then rushing through the waves towards her. "Oh, what shall we do? It will slay thee also, noble youth! Leave me, and save thyself, I prithee!"

"Not so!" cried Perseus. "I fear no monster; and I will soon make this one harmless to all!"

With these bold words, the youth sped over the waves to meet the terrible creature; and taking off the cover from the Gorgon's head, he held it up with a loud cry. The sound caused the monster to look up; and as its glance fell first upon the glaring eyes of the dead Medusa, it was instantly turned to stone and sank heavily to the bottom of the sea.

Then Perseus returned to the beautiful princess and asked her to marry him, since he already loved her; and Andromeda gladly gave her consent, since she also returned his love. So Perseus took the lovely maiden in his arms, and bore her safely over the waves to the shore; and they presently entered the royal palace together, where they were received with great joy by the King and Queen of Æthiopia and all their people, who had never expected to see the beloved princess again.

The brave young hero was married to the Princess Andromeda very soon afterwards; and at the request of the King and Queen, he remained in the land of the Æthiopians for a year. At the end of that time, however, he announced that he must return to the island of Seriphos to fulfil his promise to the greedy King Polydectes; and he bade farewell to the Æthiops and set forth in a splendid ship, with his beautiful wife to bear him company.

After a while he came to the island where his boyhood had been spent, and went to the house of good old Dictys, who was overjoyed at beholding him once again, and from whom he learned the sad news that his mother, the Princess Danae, had been reduced to slavery by the grasping King Polydectes; and, full of rage at the news, he hastened to the palace at once, to demand his mother's freedom.

As he entered the palace, he heard the sound of merry music, and soon learned from the slaves that the King was again feasting with the same gay lords who had treated the portionless youth with such scorn at their last meeting; and, without further delay, he stepped quickly into their presence and greeted them proudly.

"Ah, here comes this vain boaster!" said the King, with a scornful smile. "Since thou hast no scratch upon thee, it is plain to see that thou hast never been in the land of the Gorgons. Yet shalt thou not escape from this hall alive, unless thou bringest that which thou didst so foolishly promise—the head of Medusa."

"Smile not with such scorn, oh King, for I have fulfilled my promise to thee. Behold the head of Medusa, the Gorgon!" cried Perseus, in triumph; and uncovering the monster's head, he held it up aloft, taking care not to look upon it himself.

The King and his guests looked up at once, gazing with amazement straight into the terrible petrifying eyes of Medusa; and instantly they were all changed into lifeless figures of stone.

Then Perseus set free his beloved mother, Danae, who gladly gave welcome to the fair Princess Andromeda as her daughter; and the people of Seriphos were so well pleased that the tyrant Polydectes and his vain courtiers were dead that they desired Perseus to be their king instead. Perseus, however, declared that the throne should belong to Dictys, whose inheritance it was; and after establishing his old friend as king, the young hero determined to visit his aged grandfather, King Acrisius of Argos, that he might make peace between him and the Princess Danae.

Before setting out upon this adventure, however, Perseus returned to the gods the various things they had lent to him for the performance of the great task he had undertaken and succeeded in so well; and the Gorgon's head he presented to the goddess Minerva, who afterwards placed it in the middle of her shield.

The young prince then set off upon his new quest alone and clad in the garb of a humble shepherd, and travelled to his mother's land; and when he arrived in Argos, he found that the old King Acrisius had been driven from his throne by his own brother, but that he was living in peace and honour as the guest of the King of Larissa, with whom he had taken refuge.

Once more Perseus went on his way until at last he came to Larissa; and here he found the old King Acrisius watching a grand festival of games held in his honour.

Perseus thought his grandfather might be pleased and would be more likely to receive him kindly if he could first of all prove himself to be skilful in games; and therefore, before revealing his identity to the old man, he began to take part in the sports, and soon carried off most of the prizes. But, sad to say, whilst he was throwing a heavy quoit, the wind caught it in a sudden gust, so that it swerved out of its course and fell upon the old King with such force that the shock caused him to fall back, dead.

Thus did the seer's prophecy come true, and Acrisius was slain, though unwittingly, by his own grandson; and Perseus was so overcome with grief when he found what had happened that for a long time no one could comfort him. Although he was himself now the heir to the throne of Argos, he refused to sit thereon, because of his misfortune in having slain his grandfather; and he therefore resigned it to a kinsman in exchange for the kingdom of Tiryns.

Before commencing to rule the latter country, however, Perseus returned to the island of Seriphos, where he was received with great joy; and then, after a while, he journeyed back, with his beautiful wife, Andromeda, to Tiryns, where he reigned in peace for many happy years.

The Story of Theseus and Ariadne

One of the most famous heroes of the ancient Greeks was Theseus, the son of Aegeus, King of Athens. His mother was the Princess Aethra of Troezen, with whom he was left to spend his childhood in the city of his birth, away from his father, Aegeus. At Troezen Aegeus had left a famous sword which he placed for safety beneath an enormously-heavy stone, telling Aethra that as soon as their son was strong enough to remove the stone and take the sword, he was to set forth for Athens to join his father and share in his royal birthright.

Aegeus had a reason for thus concealing the birth of his son; for in Athens there were at that time a number of his nephews who expected to succeed him on the throne, and he feared they might kill his son did they learn that he had one, since they believed him to be childless.

Theseus very early showed signs of the manly qualities that go to the making of a hero, and eagerly profited by the excellent training afforded him of becoming proficient in all warlike pursuits, and hardy games and accomplishments; and when he had grown up to be a splendid youth, handsome, strong, and fearless, he boldly announced his intention to possess himself of his father's famous sword.

The young prince, therefore, was led to the spot where the sword had been hidden by his royal father; and, though still but a mere youth, to the amazement of all, he thrust aside the great stone, and took up the splendid sword which lay beneath it, still bright and keen as of yore. And then he bade farewell to his weeping mother, who was filled with grief at having thus to part with her fine young son, and departed from the land of his childhood, and, with his father's flashing sword girt around his waist, set forth for the famous city of Athens.

Theseus met with many adventures upon his way, and quickly proved himself to be a hero indeed; for he had to fight with several desperate robbers and savage monsters, all of whom, by means of his fearless courage and skill in arms, he was able to overcome.

When, however, he at length arived in Athens, he very nearly lost his life before he could prove his identity; but upon being brought into the presence of King Aegeus, the latter recognized him at once as his son, by means of the sword he wore. So Theseus was now welcomed as the King's son and next successor; and since he had already proved himself to be a warlike youth, his cousins, who had hoped to secure the throne for themselves, left him in peace for the time being.

For a few years Theseus lived a quiet life; and then his love of adventure led him to take part in a desperate enterprise. Some years previous to his arrival in his father's land, the Athenians had been at war with the Cretans, who had defeated them; and Minos, the King of Crete, had only withdrawn his warriors and permitted the Athenians to keep their city on condition that they sent him, as a yearly tribute, seven youths and seven maidens to be devoured by a terrible creature known as the Minotaur, which he had to keep and feed. This fearful monster had the head of a bull and the body of a man; and it was kept in a labyrinth or maze, where it roamed loose at will, and in order to keep it satisfied with its home, so that it should not come out into the city, it had to be fed on human flesh.

Ever since the war with Crete, the Athenians had been compelled, greatly to their sorrow, to send each year seven of their noblest youths and seven of their fairest maidens to be devoured by the Minotaur, as a tax to King Minos; and, in order to act fairly by his people, Aegeus caused the victims to be chosen by means of casting lots.

Then, to his horror, on the fourth year after the arrival of his son in the land, the lot fell to Theseus himself to be one of the seven youths to be sent to the Minotaur; and old Aegeus tearfully entreated his counsellors and people to send another in the place of the young prince, whose life was of such value to the country.

But Theseus himself sternly silenced his anxious father, declaring that since the lot had fallen upon him, he should certainly accompany the other youths and maidens to Crete; and he boldly added that he should give fight to the Minotaur, and hoped, by slaying it, thus to rid the people of Athens of their fatal yearly tribute.

When Aegeus heard this noble resolve, he was filled with grief, since it seemed almost certain that he would never see his beloved son again, no one having yet been known to escape from the jaws of this terrible monster; but seeing that neither tears nor entreaties would alter the firm resolve of Theseus, he bade him a sorrowful farewell, commending him to the care of the gods, and desiring him, if he should, by some miraculous means, manage to escape from death and return to Athens, to fly white sails in his usually black-rigged vessel, that the royal watcher might know, directly the ship hove in sight, that the enterprise of his heroic son had been blessed with success.

Theseus agreed to his father's request, and then boarded his black-sailed ship, together with the six other youths and the seven fair maidens who were to be given over to the devouring jaws of the Minotaur; and the sad party sailed away from Athens, followed by the sound of lamentation from the weeping people on the shores.

When the victims landed in Crete, they were not given over to the monster at once, but were kept in a safe place until the time of their sacrifice should arrive; and the bold young Prince Theseus was allowed to live for a while in the palace of the King of Crete, who, at his request, promised that he should be the first of the Athenian victims to be offered to the Minotaur.

Now, King Minos of Crete had two beautiful daughters, whose names were Phædra and Ariadne; and both these princesses were pleased to have the companionship of the handsome young Theseus—more particularly Ariadne, who fell so deeply in love with the Athenian prince that she sought desperately for some means of saving his life.

Before being cast to the Minotaur, the victims were always deprived of any weapon with which they might have defended themselves; but when the day at length arrived upon which Theseus was to be offered to the monster, Ariadne managed to convey secretly to the royal victim a sword with which to attack his foe, and also a long silken thread to use as a clue, by means of which he might find his way out of the labyrinth should he be so fortunate as to succeed in slaying the fearful beast.

In return for the valuable assistance she had thus rendered him, when Ariadne came to bid him farewell, Theseus, although he really cared more for the Princess Phædra than for the more practical sister, promised that if he escaped from the terrible danger to which he was about to be exposed, he would marry her and take her away with him.

Theseus, with the unsuspected sword carefully hidden within his clothing, was then conducted to the entrance to the labyrinth of Crete, thrust inside and left to his fate; but ere he had gone many steps, he was careful to fasten one end of the thread given him by Ariadne to a notch in the wall, so that by unwinding the bobbin as he went up and down the endless maze of passages, he knew that he would be able to find his way back to the entrance when he wished to do so. He was very glad that the loving princess had been so wise as to give him this clue of thread, since he soon realized that he would never have been able to find his way out of the network of paths without some such help; and, greatly cheered by this good piece of fortune, the young prince went boldly on his way until at length he came to the middle of the labyrinth, which led out into an open court, at one side of which he saw the Minotaur awake and ready to devour him.

The terrible monster made a fierce rush at its intended victim; but Theseus instantly drew forth his concealed sword and fought desperately for his life. A fearful battle ensued; but so strong and brave was young Theseus, and so well skilled in the use of the sword, that, after a mighty struggle, he stretched the Minotaur dead at his feet.

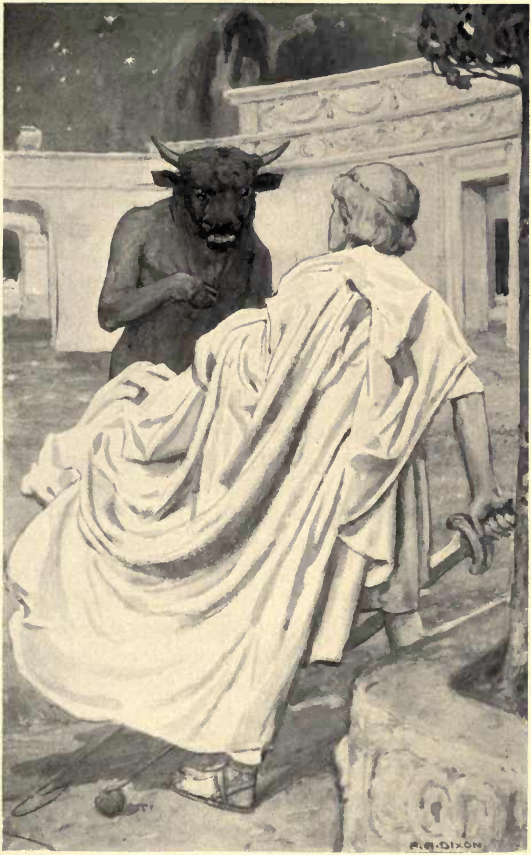
After performing this heroic deed, by means of which he had not only saved his own life, but had freed his country from the cruel yearly tribute of fourteen human victims, he turned to retrace his steps; and by means of the silken clue so thoughtfully provided by the fair princess who loved him, he succeeded in finding his way back through the ~~myriads of~~ winding passages to the entrance to the labyrinth.

He quickly made known his conquest and slaying of the Minotaur; and the King of Crete, thankful to be rid of the terrible monster, gladly gave permission for the other intended victims to return to their own land.

So Theseus boarded his vessel once more, with the now-rejoicing Athenian youths and maidens whose lives he had saved; and when the gentle Ariadne came also to remind him of the promise he had made to her, he could not refuse to take her with him, although, in spite of her kindness to him, he still cared more for her sister Phædra, whom he really desired to marry.

And now I am sorry to have to relate a very mean act of Theseus, and one which is all the more to be regretted when we consider how glorious were his hero deeds, and how well he conducted himself when he became a king.

On the return journey to Athens the prince's



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THESEUS FIGHTS THE MINOTAUR

vessel was caught in a storm and driven out of its course, so that the party had to take refuge on the lonely island of Naxos until the wind had abated somewhat; and here, when the others all returned to the ship, the Princess Ariadne was deserted and left alone by Theseus, who hurried on board whilst she was resting and sailed away without her, thus returning her love and kindness with ingratitude—though, doubtless, he excused his base conduct by thinking that, though he was now acting cruelly to Ariadne, he was about to bring joy to her sister Phædra, who also loved him, and whom he intended to marry later on.

I must tell you that the deserted Ariadne, though she grieved at her sad fate for a long time, was at length comforted by Bacchus, the merry, laughing god of wine, who, finding the unhappy princess alone on the island, took pity upon her and persuaded her to marry him and to think no more about the Athenian prince who had broken his word to her.

So, in due time, Ariadne forgot her grief, and was married to the merry god; and on her wedding day Bacchus presented her with a crown of seven stars, which she afterwards always wore until her death, when it was carried up to the heavens and set there as a constellation or group of bright stars to shine down upon the world for ever. Thus was the fair, loving Ariadne, though deserted by a mortal lover, blessed and honoured by the gods; and a severe punishment for his faithlessness almost immediately fell upon Theseus after his base act—that ugly blot upon the fair page of his hero life.

As the vessel drew near to the city of Athens, Theseus, in the joy of his victory, forgot the instructions given to him by his father to fly white sails as the token of his success; and when old King Aegeus from his lofty watch tower—whither he bent his steps every day to look for the first signs of the returning ship—beheld the eagerly-expected vessel at length drawing near, black-rigged as when it had set forth with its unhappy victims, he believed that his beloved son had failed in the enterprise and was dead. On realizing this sad surmise, the old King was so filled with despair that he cast himself headlong from the watch tower into the waves below and was drowned; and the waters in that district were ever afterwards known as the "Ægean Sea", in memory of the unhappy king who perished in their depths.

So Theseus returned to a city of mourning; but, after a while, when he had recovered somewhat from his grief, he himself became King of Athens and gained great glory for his people. He ruled the Athenians wisely and well, making many new and excellent laws for them and improving their lives in every way; and he became a greatly-beloved and much-admired king.

In spite of his care for the welfare of his people, Theseus still found time to satisfy his love of adventure; and he performed many other wonderful hero deeds at various times.

In most of his later enterprises Theseus was accompanied by his great friend, Pirithoüs, King of the Lapithæ, who, in the first instance, had made war upon him solely for the opportunity of making his acquaintance, having a great admiration for one who had been so bold and fearless as to slay the Minotaur single-handed. When the opposing armies met, however, and the two kings came face to face, a mutual love grew up in their hearts at that first moment of meeting, so that, instead of fighting, they fell into each other's arms and embraced; and ever afterwards they were the greatest of friends.

When Pirithoüs was married to a beautiful lady named Hippodamia, Theseus went to join in the wedding festivities; and he was able to help his new friend out of a great trouble at the same time. Pirithoüs had invited to his wedding some strange beings to whom he was related, and who were known as the Centaurs—a race of creatures having the heads and arms of men and the bodies and legs of horses—who lived in a neighbouring country; and when these strange guests arrived, they so greatly admired the beauty of the bride, that they tried to run away with her, as well as with the fairest of her waiting-maidens. The ladies were all rescued, however, by the other wedding guests; but the result was that the Lapithæ made war upon the Centaurs. Theseus declared that he would join his friend in this enterprise; and in the battle that ensued he led the Lapithæ with such skill that the Centaurs were utterly defeated and driven from their own land to dwell in caves and other lonely places.

After this Theseus made war upon the Thebans, and vanquished them; and later on he joined the great hero, Hercules, in his war against the Amazons—a race of tall, warrior women who fought their enemies and defended themselves without the aid of men, whom they despised and would not permit to live in their land. Having overcome the Amazons, their splendid queen, Hippolyta, was given to him as a prize, and he married her.

After the death of Hippolyta, Theseus was married to Phædra, Ariadne's sister, who, however, brought much trouble into his life; and he endeavoured also to secure as his wife, Helen, the daughter of Jupiter and the most beautiful woman in the world, whom he had carried away by force, but whom he was obliged to return at the request of her twin brothers, Castor and Pollux.

Theseus also joined his friend, Pirithoüs, when the latter desired to take away for himself Proserpina, the wife of Pluto, King of the Underworld. For this purpose, they both had to journey to the Land of Shades; and here Pirithoüs was slain by Cerberus, the three-headed dog that guarded the gates, whilst Theseus was seized and chained to a stone, where he remained a captive for several years until Hercules, hearing of his sad plight, came and released him.

On his return to Athens, Theseus found that his people had chosen another king, thinking him dead; and he was therefore driven forth into exile into the land of Scyros, where he met his death by treachery—being thrust down a precipice by King Lycomedes.

Bellerophon and Pegasus, the Winged Horse

Bellerophon—whose original name was Hipponous, given him because he was the first to teach the art of governing horses with a bridle—was a handsome and virtuous young prince, the son of Glaucus, King of Corinth; but having been so unfortunate as, accidentally, to kill his own brother, he was compelled to take refuge in another country.

His father sent him to Prœtus, King of Argos, who received him kindly and sympathized in the misfortune that had befallen him; and here the young prince might have lived in peace for many years had he not happened to offend Queen Antea of Argos. Antea was very vain of her good looks and loved flattery and admiration beyond all other things in the world; and when Bellerophon first came to her court, she quickly fell in love with him and hoped to secure him as another of her many admirers.

But Bellerophon was too upright and honourable to yield to the temptation thus put in his way; and having, besides, no love for the faithless queen, he repulsed her advances and refused to become her lover. This conduct on his part so enraged Antea that she resolved to be revenged upon one who had been so bold as to disdain her love; and therefore she falsely accused him to her husband of the crime she had tried to entice him to commit but which he had so successfully resisted.

Prœtus, though believing his queen s accusation, did not desire to violate the laws of hospitality by taking the life of one who was still his guest; and therefore he thought to achieve his end by dispatching the really innocent Bellerophon to his father-in-law, Iobates, King of Lycia, with tablets upon which was engraved an instruction to punish the bearer with death because of Queen Antea's accusation against him. Bellerophon was led to believe that the tablets he bore were letters of favourable introduction to his new host; and it is from this incident that the expression "Bellerophon's Letters" came into use, an expression applied to one who bears to another letters which he imagines are written in his favour, but which in reality, unknown to himself, are written in disparagement of him and intended to work his ruin.

Upon the young prince's arrival in Lycia, he was well received by King Iobates, who, in accordance with the hospitable custom of the ancients, entertained his stranger guest for nine days before asking the reason for his visit; and even then, having learnt from the tablets delivered to him of the bearer's supposed crime, he still was averse to laying hands upon one whom he had treated as an honoured guest.

The King of Lycia, however, determined to accomplish by outside means the obligation laid upon him; and therefore he commanded Bellerophon to set forth at once to slay the Chimæra, a terrible monster that breathed forth flames, and which had a lion's head, a goat's body, and a dragon's serpentine tail. This fearful beast had for many years inhabited the plains and fields of Lycia, consuming all who came in its fiery path; and Iobates felt that by sending his now-unwelcome guest to attack the Chimæra, he was certainly sending him to his death.

Bellerophon, however, was a noble prince and of the stuff of which the heroes of old were made; and regarding the well-nigh impossible task now set him as a mighty deed of valour which was to prove his own worth, he determined to use his powers to the utmost in order to deliver the people of Lycia from the plague under which they had suffered so long. He therefore entreated the assistance of Minerva, the goddess of wisdom, who, hearing his supplication and wishing to assist one who had been wrongfully accused of a crime he had never committed, secured for him the famous winged horse, Pegasus.

This beautiful, magic steed had sprung from the blood of the Gorgon Medusa when the great hero, Perseus, struck off her head; and it had been so named because its strange birth took place near the sources or *pēgai* of the ocean. As soon as born, the winged horse mounted the skies in order to choose an abode for himself; and seeing that Mount Helicon, in Bœotia, was a fair spot, he determined to rest there. As he set foot upon Mount Helicon, he struck the earth violently with his hoof, and instantly there issued forth a fountain, the magic waters of which possessed the wonderful power of giving poetic inspiration, and which was afterwards named Hippocrene or Horse Fountain.

The Muses—nine fair goddesses of poetry and the arts—loved to rest upon the sunny slopes of Helicon, and were usually to be found there when absent from their other favourite haunt, Mount Parnassus; and here, also, Pegasus was cared for by Minerva, who succeeded in taming him so that he would bear a rider, who needed, however, to be one of fearless courage to sit so fiery a steed.

When the goddess of wisdom brought Pegasus to Bellerophon, the latter was amazed at the animal's graceful beauty and wonderful folded wings; and full of gratitude to Minerva for thus aiding him in his enterprise, the hero-prince promptly and without any fear sprang astride the winged horse, which instantly mounted into the air with him.

By exercising great caution and patience, the courageous Bellerophon succeeded in making Pegasus obey his will; and then he guided him towards the plains of Lycia and hovered over the Chimæra. The terrible beast in the field below breathed forth tongues of scorching flames, savagely ground its lion's teeth, and lashed its serpent's tail when it felt the pain of the arrows shot down upon it so remorselessly by its enemy up aloft; but it was powerless to harm Bellerophon, who instantly mounted higher into the sky whenever his intended victim hissed forth a longer tongue of fire than usual—and thus, at last, the long-feared Chimæra fell to the ground lifeless, slain by the arrows of the triumphant Bellerophon.

According to some writers the Chimæra was really a volcano in Lycia, around the top of which dwelt lions, about the middle grazed goats, and at the foot swarmed poisonous serpents; and Bellerophon was believed to be the first person to render this mountain habitable.

When the King of Lycia knew that the terrible monster which had so long ravaged his land was dead, he could not help but feel grateful to the brave young prince who had performed this mighty hero deed, even though the latter had not lost his life in so doing, as desired. However, as he still felt himself bound to carry out the request of his royal son-in-law, Iobates next sent Bellerophon to fight with the Lycian soldiers against the Solymi, a warlike neighbouring race who had long troubled him; but the slayer of the Chimæra also vanquished the Solymi and returned to Lycia alive and full of glory, for the gods were on his side, and beautiful Minerva sustained him in the fray.

Finally, King Iobates sent the invincible hero to fight against the famous women warriors known as the Amazons; but from this campaign also, Bellerophon returned triumphant and unharmed; and then Iobates, realizing that it was useless to attempt to destroy one who was evidently being protected by the gods, and feeling more grateful than ever for the mighty deeds of valour performed by the hero, ceased to seek his death, and, as a reward for his services, bestowed upon him in marriage his own daughter, the Princess Philonoe, together with a portion of his kingdom.

Having thus overcome the false accusation made against him, Bellerophon might have dwelt long in peace and prosperity; but now presumptuous ambition seized him, and one day he mounted upon the winged horse, Pegasus, and attempted to reach even unto the heavens, the glorious abode of the Olympian gods. For this bold presumption, however, dire misfortune came upon him; for the mighty god, Jupiter, ever jealous of any invasion of his realms or powers by rash mortals, caused the winged horse to throw its ambitious rider, so that the latter was flung back violently to the earth.

Some say that Jupiter hurled a thunderbolt at Bellerophon, who, consequently, was struck with blindness, and passed the remainder of his life in darkness and obscurity; and others declare that the jealous god sent a gadfly to torment the winged horse, so that, in its temporary madness, it threw its rider.

However it was, Bellerophon was thrown back to the earth, and ever afterwards avoided the face of man in shame, and wandered aimlessly hither and thither to the end of his days.

The winged horse, Pegasus, however, was permitted to continue its upward flight until it reached the heavens, where it was given a place, and so became one of the constellations.

Fair Helen and the Siege of Troy

The story of the war between the Greeks and the Trojans and the famous ten years' siege of Troy, is one of the most interesting of all the ancient wonder tales; for many splendid and well-known heroes took part in this war, and their deeds of valour were so great that Homer, the finest of all the ancient poets, took them as the subject-matter of his beautiful epic poem *The Iliad.*

I cannot tell you here of the doings of all the heroes of the Trojan war, but will relate only the deeds of the most famous of these; and we must begin with the story of Paris and Fair Helen.

Priam, King of Troy, and his fair Queen, Hecuba, had a fine family of sons and daughters, of whom the most celebrated were Hector, Paris, Deiphobus, Helenus, Cassandra, and Polyxena.

When their second son, Paris, was born, the King and Queen of Troy were filled with dismay; for a soothsayer, or wise man, foretold that this child, when he grew up to be a man, would be as a firebrand, and, by his rash conduct, would cause a terrible war. In order, therefore, to prevent disaster, Priam gave his infant son into the charge of a slave, with instructions to destroy the child; but the helpless babe was so beautiful to look upon that the slave had not the heart to kill him, and therefore left him upon a lonely hill slope known as Mount Ida.

Here the royal babe was found by some kindly shepherds, who took charge of him and brought him up amongst their own people, giving him the name of Paris, and teaching him their humble calling.

But the youthful Paris—who was very highly gifted—quickly learned more than the simple shepherds ever knew; and he grew up to be so clever and accomplished in all the arts, and so extremely handsome in his appearance, that he was greatly admired, and his opinion on many important matters was frequently sought.

So many fair graces had the handsome young shepherd that he attracted the love of Œnone, one of the nymphs of Mount Ida; and the pair were married. But Paris was ambitious, and did not intend to pass his life as a shepherd on Mount Ida, even though he had a fair nymph as his wife; and in a short time he deserted Œnone, for the following reason.

When Peleus, King of the Myrmidons in Thessaly, was married to the sea nymph, Thetis, a splendid feast was held, to which all the gods and goddesses, save one, were invited; and the divinity who had been left out—the goddess of Discord—was so disappointed and angry at the slight thus put upon her that she determined to cause strife at the festival. Therefore, she threw into the midst of the assembled guests a bright, golden apple, upon which was written the inscription: "Let the fairest take it".

As the disappointed goddess had hoped, discord immediately arose; for all the goddesses began to quarrel amongst themselves as to which was the most beautiful.

At length the claimants for the golden apple became reduced to three, who were acknowledged, without doubt, to be the loveliest of all the goddesses—Juno, Minerva, and Venus. To make a choice between these three, however, was so extremely difficult that, eventually, Jupiter declared the matter should be decided by the famous shepherd of Mount Ida, Paris, who was so greatly admired by all, and whose judgment and good taste in such a matter could be relied upon.

So the three fair goddesses were sent to Mount Ida, where the famous Judgment of Paris took place.

Now it was no easy matter, even for so keen an admirer of beauty as Paris, to decide which was the fairest of the three lovely goddesses, who were all so equally beautiful; and though the young shepherd gazed long and carefully at the three claimants for the prize, he could not at first make up his mind to which one he should award the golden apple.

Then the three goddesses, realizing the difficulty of their judge, tried to gain his favour by means of gifts. Juno promised to give him mighty power and a splendid kingdom if he awarded her the prize; Minerva promised that he should gain greater glory in war than any other hero; and Venus promised that if the golden apple were awarded to her, she would give him the most beautiful woman in the whole world for his wife.

Now beauty appealed more to Paris than anything else under the sun; and when he heard the promise of the cunning Venus—who well understood the hearts of men—it was more than he could resist, so that he awarded the prize to her as the most beautiful of all the goddesses. Thus was the golden apple given to Venus, who was ever afterwards acknowledged as the goddess of beauty and love; and everyone was satisfied with the judgment of Paris, except the two disappointed goddesses, Juno and Minerva, who no longer showed favour to the young shepherd of Mount Ida, but tried to harm him whenever they could do so. But Paris did not very greatly fear their displeasure, since he had the constant help and favour of Venus, who now took him under her especial charge and protected him from many dangers.

Soon after this event, King Priam of Troy held a festival of games and sports for his sons and the lords of the neighbouring countries; and Paris went to join in the competitions which took place and proved himself so skilful in manly exercises that he carried off most of the prizes.

The young prince Hector and his brothers were very displeased that a seeming stranger should thus prove more skilful in arms than themselves; and they would have driven Paris away, and perhaps even have slain him, had not the Princess Cassandra recognized that the young shepherd was in reality their own brother, who had been lost in infancy.

Priam and Hecuba—who had long since regretted the harsh treatment meted out to their second son—were full of joy at thus receiving him back again, and now gladly acknowledged him as their son; and Paris soon gained great favour and influence in the Court of Troy.

But in spite of the new honours now thrust upon him, Paris did not forget that Venus had promised him the loveliest woman in the world as his wife; and soon he besought the fair goddess to redeem her promise to him.

At this time the most beautiful woman in the world was Helen, the Queen of Menelaus, King of Sparta; and this Helen was so dazzling in her perfect beauty and fascination that she was beloved by all who gazed upon her, and many men went mad for love of her.

This, then, was the beautiful woman whom Venus now promised to Paris; and the goddess bade the young prince set forth on some special royal mission to Sparta, that he might look upon the fair queen, whom, with the assistance of Venus, he was to win for his own.

Paris, forgetful of the pretty nymph, Œnone, was now all eagerness to behold fair Helen; and gathering together a fine fleet of ships, he departed on an embassy to Sparta, where he was received with great honour by King Menelaus, who showed him many kind favours.

No sooner did Paris set eyes on the beautiful young Queen of Sparta than he fell deeply in love with her at once, and longed to take her as his wife; and Helen, on her part, was so greatly attracted by the handsome looks of the Prince of Troy that she could not resist the temptation of listening to his words of love.

When, therefore, King Menelaus shortly afterwards went on a mission to the island of Crete, Paris, with the help of the goddess Venus, laid careful plans, and succeeded in carrying off the beautiful Helen during her husband's absence, and conveyed her with all speed to Troy; and here she lived as the wife of Paris, and was always afterwards spoken of as "Helen of Troy".

When Menelaus returned to Sparta and learned that he had been betrayed by the faithless Paris, who, in return for his kindness and hospitality, had stolen his fair wife away from him, he was filled with grief and anger; and quickly gathering together all the chief princes and lords of Greece, he called upon them to assist him in compelling the young Prince of Troy to restore Helen to her home once more.

Now, most of the great chiefs of Greece had themselves loved the beautiful Helen and when she had at length chosen Menelaus of Sparta as her husband, the rejected suitors had all promised to defend her and to rescue her, should she ever be stolen away from him.

When, therefore, Menelaus now reminded them of this old promise, they all gladly renewed their vows to him, and agreed to join their forces and make war upon the Trojans, should the latter refuse to restore the fair Queen of Sparta to her rightful lord.

Peaceful measures were tried first, however, and ambassadors were sent to the King of Troy, demanding the instant return of fair Helen; and Priam, remembering the disasters foretold at the birth of his second son, would probably have been very willing to comply with this peremptory request. But by this time the impetuous and daring Paris had gained such power and influence in Troy that he did not have much difficulty in persuading his father to defy the princes of Greece, and to permit him to hold the most beautiful woman in the world against all comers; and the result was that a desperate war began between the Trojans and the princes of Greece, who collected their combined forces outside the gates of Troy, and besieged the city for ten years, during which time many fierce battles were fought and thousands of brave men lost their lives.

Even the gods took an active part in this great struggle; for Juno and Minerva, still smarting under their failure at the judgment of Paris, were hostile to the Trojans, and did all in their power to assist the Greek leaders, whilst Venus showed favour to Paris and his people, because of the award he had made to her as the Queen of Beauty.

When Priam, King of Troy, saw the armies of Greece outside his gates, he gathered his forces together to defend the city and to fight against the besiegers without; and amongst the chief leaders of his army were his own gallant sons, of whom the eldest, Hector, was the bravest and most splendid of all the Trojan heroes.

Hector was a truly noble character; and but for his dauntless courage, firmness and strength, Troy could never have held out as long as she did. When the courage of the besieged began to fail, Hector, with fiery words of encouragement, put new life and strength into them, so that they gained fresh victories; and he persuaded them to be patient and to refrain from petty squabbles amongst themselves. He had much scorn for the poor-spirited, and would scold roundly any backsliders; and he did not even hesitate to rebuke his brother Paris, when he found the latter idling in the company of fair Helen and her maidens instead of fighting upon the walls of the city. Yet, though so bold and warlike, and so severe with offenders, Hector also could be gentle and loving; and his parting with his fair wife, Andromache, before going into battle, was full of tenderness and has been most beautifully described by Homer in the *Iliad.*

Many were the exploits and splendid deeds of Hector during the great war; and as long as he remained alive in Troy, the city could not be taken; and it was not until after he had been slain that the Trojans lost heart—for though Paris, too, fought bravely to defend the city he had brought such trouble upon, he had not the wonderful powers of leadership possessed by his nobler brother.

Another of the Trojan heroes was Æneas, one of the sons of Venus. He performed many mighty deeds in the company of Hector, and since he was beloved by the gods, his life was many times saved by them.

The Greeks chose for their chief leader Agamemnon, King of Mycenæ, the brother of Menelaus; but the greatest of all their heroes was Achilles, who was the son of that Peleus and Thetis at whose wedding the goddess of discord had flung amongst the guests the golden apple to be given to the fairest, which had resulted in the famous Judgment of Paris.

Achilles was the bravest and most beautiful of the Greeks, and gained great glory for them; and his story is full of interest. When he was a baby, his mother plunged him into the Styx, the chief river of the under-world, by which means he was rendered invulnerable, with the exception of his ankles, by which she held him, and which remained, therefore, the only part of his body where a weapon could pierce and kill him.

Having been told by a soothsayer that Troy could not be taken without the aid of Achilles, Thetis, fearful lest her son might come to harm did he engage in that terrible war, sent him—disguised as a girl, under the name of Pyhrra—at the age of nine years, to the court of Lycomedes, King of Scyros, with whose daughters he was brought up. Later on, however, Ulysses, another great chief of the Greeks, knowing also that Troy could not be taken without the assistance of young Achilles, and having learnt where the youth had been hidden by his mother, came himself to Scyros and sent into the palace a quantity of arms and weapons amongst a bundle of jewels and maidens' apparel; and upon Achilles eagerly snatching at the weapons, instead of at the draperies, his disguise was thus penetrated and he was expelled from the palace.

The crafty Ulysses, having thus gained his desire, now took the eager youth to join the Greek army outside Troy; and Achilles soon became their most famous hero and performed many mighty deeds. His mother, Thetis, realizing that it was in vain for her to attempt to hide away her warlike son, now sent him a splendid suit of magic shining armour, forged by Vulcan, the god of fire, which flashed in the sunlight with every movement of the young hero; and Achilles, thus equipped, gained many battles, and was the envy of the Trojans, whose great leader, Hector, he at length met in battle.

The duel between the two most glorious leaders of the Trojan War took place when the siege had lasted for several years. After one of the fiercest attacks on the city, at which most of the chief Trojan warriors had been slain, Achilles met the fiery Hector, who rushed forward to avenge the slaughter of his companions-in-arms; and a long and terrible duel ensued between the pair. Unhappily for Hector, he came to the contest weary with the long-drawn-out battle, discouraged and grieving for the loss of his many brave friends; but having been lured into the presence of the mightiest of his foes by the goddess Minerva—who had disguised herself as one of his sisters in order to carry out her plan, since she still sided with the Greeks, and knew that Troy would never be taken whilst Hector lived—he would not withdraw from the attack, but fought on courageously, in spite of his weariness. Then Minerva encouraged Achilles—who wore his magic armour as a protection whenever he went into battle—who was still fresh and full of hope from the victories of the day; and, in addition to these advantages he was also eager to avenge the death of his friend Patroclus, who had been slain by Hector a short time previously.

Achilles, therefore, fought like a raging lion; and, in the end, he slew the mighty Hector, and dragged the body of the dead hero three times around the walls of Troy in triumph.

The Trojans were overcome with grief at the death of their glorious leader; but Paris now came forward and did many bold deeds in defence of the ill-fated city. He was not afraid to meet even King Menelaus, whom he had so deeply wronged; and he fought a desperate duel with the angry King of Sparta and would have been slain by him had not the goddess Venus—still faithful to him because of the award of beauty he had granted to her—suddenly appeared and carried him off in a cloud, so that he escaped that danger.

It is also related that the mighty Achilles himself was slain by Paris, but treacherously, the story being as follows: During a short truce, the Princess Polyxena, one of the daughters of King Priam, went to walk one day on the walls of Troy; and there she was seen by Achilles, who immediately fell so deeply in love with her that he sent messengers to ask her hand in marriage. Priam gave his consent, and the bridal party met in the temple of Apollo for the wedding; but Paris, furious at the intrusion of the slayer of his noble brother Hector, hid himself behind the statue of Apollo, from whence he shot a poisoned arrow into the ankle of Achilles—the only vulnerable part of his body—and instantly killed the brave hero. It is further said that Polyxena was afterwards offered up as a sacrifice, in order that her spirit might join that of Achilles in the Land of Shades, as compensation for his treacherous murder. Other writers, however, say that it was not Paris who shot the fatal arrow, but that it was aimed by the god Apollo himself; but the above story is the one most generally accepted.

Paris, in his turn, was at length slain by a famous archer named Philoctetes. When wounded by the poisoned arrow, he sought out his deserted and neglected wife, Œnone, and entreated her to heal his hurts; but Œnone refused to help her faithless husband, and thus Paris died.

After the deaths of Hector and Paris, the Greeks renewed their attack on Troy with greater force than ever; and in spite of the fact that their glorious hero, Achilles, had been slain they still did not want for clever and brave leaders. Amongst their next greatest chiefs were Ajax, Prince of Salamis, Ulysses, King of Ithaca (who was also known as Odysseus), and Diomedes, a hero as greatly admired for his brave deeds outside Troy as Achilles himself. The magic armour of Achilles being a greatly coveted treasure, the Greek leaders fought for possession of it; and it

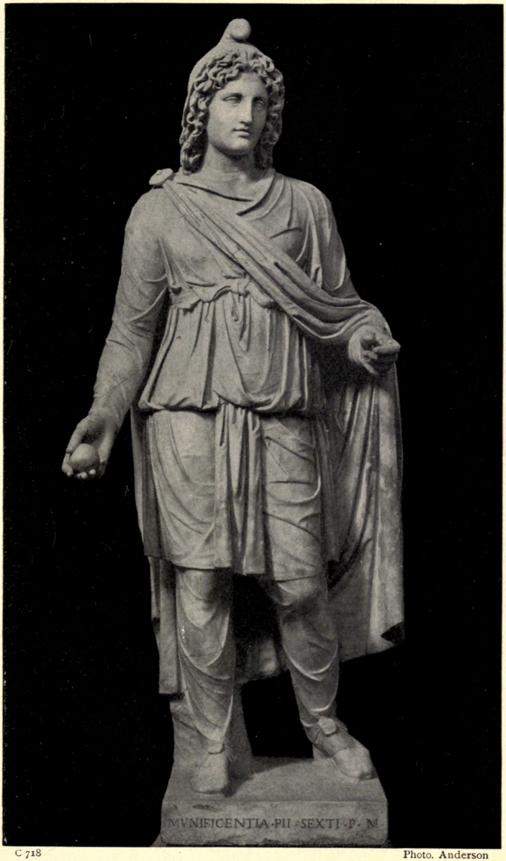
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Photo. Anderson

PARIS

From the statue in the Vatican Museum, Rome

is said that Ajax lost his life in the contest, and that Ulysses won the armour.

In the story of the wanderings of Ulysses you will read more about this hero; but at the siege of Troy he performed many mighty deeds, and it was owing to his cunning and cleverness that the city was at length taken by the Greeks.

Having learnt that the Trojans believed that they would keep their stronghold so long as a certain ancient statue of Minerva, known as the Palladium, remained in the city, Ulysses formed the daring plan of carrying off this sacred treasure; and, in the dead of night, accompanied by Diomedes, he went forth to perform this dangerous deed in secret. The two bold heroes managed to creep into the city past the sleeping guards; and having broken the Palladium from its stand in the temple, they brought it safely into their own camp.

Then Ulysses gave orders for the Greek armies to embark in their waiting ships, and to sail away to only a short distance, but to return with all speed when a signal was given them to do so; and by this means he hoped that the Trojans would imagine that their enemies had at last given up the siege, and so would be off their guard.

Before embarking, however, the Greeks left on the shore a huge, hollow, wooden horse, which had just been built at the command of Ulysses, who had already concealed himself within it, together with a few of his boldest warriors. Meanwhile, Sinon, a relative of Ulysses, had allowed himself to be taken captive by the Trojans, whom he advised to take the strange wooden horse into the city, declaring to them that it had magic powers, and had been left for them by the Greeks in return for the stolen Palladium.

The Trojans very foolishly believed the story of Sinon; and seeing that the Greeks had indeed taken to their ships and set sail, they dragged the wooden horse into their city. Sinon having been allowed to go unfettered, because of his seeming friendliness, then crept to the wooden horse in the dead of night and set free the party of concealed Greeks, who quickly spread themselves out in various directions and set fire to the city.

By this time, also, the main body of the Greeks had turned their vessels about; and having relanded silently, they rushed headlong into the city through the gates, which had been opened for them by their friends already within.

By means of this cunning plan the city of Troy was at length taken by the Greeks after a ten years' siege; and the famous Trojan War thus came to an end. King Priam was slain by Pyrrhus, the son of Achilles; and his queen, Hecuba, and those of his children who remained alive were taken away as slaves.

The hero, Æneas, who had fought bravely until the end, managed to escape from the burning city, carrying his aged father Anchises upon his back; and for many years afterwards he became a wanderer. His further adventures are told in the story of "The Wanderings of Æneas".

It is said that the lovely Helen, who had been the cause of this sad war, now showed herself again in a faithless light, and that, in order to regain the favour of the victorious Menelaus, she brought him secretly to the sleeping chamber of Deiphobus, another of Priam's sons, to whom she had been married after the death of Paris, who was thus slain by her treachery; but, whether by this means or by some other plan, it is believed by certain writers that she did actually become reconciled to Menelaus at the end of the siege of Troy, and returned with him to Sparta, where they both lived happily for many years.

Other writers, however, believe that fair Helen was never taken to Troy at all, but that she was captured by the King of Egypt and kept a prisoner by him, whilst Paris went on to Troy alone, and that at the end of the famous siege she was given up to Menelaus. Others again believe that she hid herself away in some far-distant temple, where she became immortal, and was worshipped as a goddess; and many strange tales have been told of her later appearances in various parts of the world.

The Wanderings of Ulysses

After the fall of Troy the various heroes and princes of Greece left alive from the terrible ten years' siege sailed back to their own lands once more, some of them meeting with strange adventures upon the return journey and wandering for many years before reaching their homes; and the most famous of these wanderers was Ulysses (who was also called Odysseus by the Greeks), who met with so many marvellous adventures and terrible misfortunes that twenty years passed by ere he returned to his own land once again.

Ulysses was the King of Ithaca, where he ruled wisely and well, and lived so happily with his beloved wife, Penelope, that when first called upon to take part in the Trojan War he refused to leave his fair queen and his young son, Telemachus, who was at that time but an infant; and since from his earliest years he had been renowned for his crafty wits, he quickly formed the cunning device of feigning madness, hoping that the princes of Greece would thus consider him useless as an ally, and leave him in peace.

With this idea in view, he yoked two different beasts—a horse and a bull—to a plough, and began to plough the sand upon the seashore as though it were a field, and to sow salt in the furrows, declaring to the amazed passers-by that this was seed from which he expected a fine crop of corn to grow. However, Palamedes, the chief who had been sent to Ithaca to bid the young king join the expedition against Troy, suspected this behaviour to be a trick on the part of Ulysses, knowing him to be crafty; and he also thought out a cunning device to prove this to be the case. He took the baby prince, Telemachus, and laid him in one of the furrows of sand on the seashore, remaining at a little distance to see what would happen; and when Ulysses came by with the plough, the watcher observed that when the royal father beheld his child in the furrow, he turned his ill-matched beasts aside to avoid harming the babe, thus proving beyond all doubt that he was no madman, but possessed of excellents wits.

His crafty ruse having thus proved unsuccessful, Ulysses could no longer refuse to join the expedition, which he had never thought of shirking from cowardice, being one of the bravest and boldest of men, but only because he dreaded leaving his beloved wife and child without his protection. He therefore bade a sad farewell to fair Penelope, who promised to remain faithful and constant to him throughout her life, even were he fated never to return to her; and then he set forth for the siege of Troy.

It was well for the Greeks that Ulysses accompanied them; for he proved to be one of their greatest heroes in the famous expedition against King Priam of Troy; and it was chiefly owing to his bravery and crafty schemes that the siege was at length ended and the city captured.

It is not necessary to deal here with the deeds of Ulysses in this famous war, as these have been related already in the story of "Fair Helen and the Siege of Troy"; but the adventures of this bold hero on his return journey are so full of interest that they form the subject of Homer's noble epic poem, the *Odyssey*, which is the companion poem to the *Iliad*, and are well worth relating to you.

Although Ulysses had set forth for Troy with twelve fine ships, he started upon his return journey with but one vessel, upon which he had gathered his few remaining friends and a company of sailors for navigation purposes.

No sooner had they set sail than terrible storms arose, and the vessel was so buffeted by contrary winds that she often wandered out of her course. Thus Ulysses and his companions lost their way more than once, to their great distress and discomfort, since they were all wearied to death of warfare and the hardships they had all been called upon to endure during the terrible siege of Troy, and longed passionately for the peace and comfort of their pleasant homes in Ithaca. But many weary years of wandering went by while they strove to reach their own quiet firesides; and most of them never set eyes on Ithaca again, but perished miserably on the journey.

One day it happened that the storm-tossed vessel touched upon the shores of an unknown land; and seeing that this was a beautiful country, with cool shady woods and sunny glades, where sparkling streams rushed merrily down the gentle slopes, gaily-coloured birds sang sweetly in the trees and luscious fruits grew in abundance on every side, the companions of Ulysses desired to land that they might refresh themselves after their weary tossing in the ocean and rest in peace for a season before proceeding on their way.

"Let us stay here until we are rested," they pleaded. "We are weary to death of being buffeted by the stormy winds, and we have no strength left in us."

Then Ulysses reminded them that they still had far to go ere they could hope to come in sight of Ithaca, and that if they idled now, so much the longer would be the time spent upon their journey and before they could greet their beloved ones again; and he warned them also that many unsuspected dangers might lurk in this seemingly fair land.

But the wayfarers refused to listen to the wise counsels of their leader; and therefore they landed and wandered forth into the sunny glades and verdant groves, plucking the luscious fruits they found growing so abundantly on every side and drinking deep draughts from the clear sparkling streams.

Ulysses, however, would not join them, for his thoughts were with his beloved Penelope, and he was eager to continue his voyage; and as he stood upon the beach, impatiently awaiting the return of his companions, Mercury, the messenger of the gods, suddenly appeared before him, being the bearer of a message of warning from the great goddess Minerva, who had ever shown favour to Ulysses.

"The gracious goddess bids me tell thee, oh Ulysses, that there is danger for thee and thy companions in this land," said Mercury. "Rest here if thou wilt, and eat of the fruits growing here and drink of this sparkling water; but of the lotus which also grows plentifully in this land, eat not. If thou eatest of its delicious fruit, thou wilt forget all thy beloved ones at home and wilt care no more for their love, nor for thy country and people, but wilt desire to remain always in this heavily-scented land and join its sleepy inhabitants—for this is the land of the lotus-eaters; and if thou eatest of the lotus plant of forgetfulness, thou wilt also become a lotus-eater, and wilt never more behold the fair face of thy gentle Penelope nor delight in the exploits of thy young son, Telemachus, but wilt live and die here, lost to glory and renown."

Having thus delivered his message of warning, Mercury vanished; and Ulysses, knowing now that his fears of danger were well founded, quickly gathered together a dozen or so of the worthiest of his companions, and, telling them of the terrible danger they were in, besought them to assist him in persuading all the wayfarers to return to the vessel without further delay.

But alas! Some of the wanderers had already eaten of the sweet lotus plant, and had even now forgotten their homes and beloved ones; and many others also desired to taste the magic fruits, since the pleasantness of the land greatly delighted them and they dreaded the dangers of the sea. Then Ulysses was aroused to anger by their poor spirit, and commanded his more faithful companions to use coercion and to drag the laggards to the vessel by main force.

This they did right nobly; but though they managed to drag most of the men back to the ship, a number of them broke away the thongs that bound them, and, eating greedily of the lotus fruits, were glad to remain amongst the dreamy lotus-eaters for the rest of their days, forgetful of love, home, and duty. Then Ulysses, having thus gathered together with desperate endeavour all those of his companions who had not eaten of the plant of forgetfulness, set sail immediately and continued his journey, offering up grateful thanks to the goddess Minerva for having preserved him from this great danger.

After wandering for many more months, the wayfarers were caught in another terrific storm, which drove their vessel on to the shores of Sicily; and here Ulysses and his companions were seized by the Cyclops—a race of monster one-eyed giants—who, though living the lives of shepherds, devoured human beings whenever they came their way.

Polyphemus, the King of the Cyclops, imprisoned Ulysses and his friends in an enormous cave, the opening of which he closed with a heavy rock; and in the evening he also drove into the cave his great flock of sheep, and ate two of the unhappy captives for his supper. Next morning, he let out his sheep, counting each one as it passed by, and afterwards rolled back the heavy rock to prevent the captives from escaping; and then Ulysses called his terrified companions around him, and, by means of his crafty wits, contrived a cunning plan by which they should save their lives, and escape from their dangerous position.

When the cannibal King of the Cyclops returned in the evening, Ulysses offered him some of the strong wine he had brought with him; and upon the monster accepting his invitation to drink, he gave him such a large quantity of wine that he became intoxicated. Then, growing more friendly, Polyphemus asked Ulysses his name; and the crafty hero gave that of "Noman".

Soon afterwards the giant fell into a heavy slumber; and then Ulysses and his companions, having made all ready beforehand, bored out his one great eye—which was circular and situated in the centre of his forehead—with a red-hot firebrand. Polyphemus soon began to roar like a great lion, so that the other Cyclops dwelling near came to enquire the cause; but upon their chief replying that "Noman" had injured him, they returned to their own abodes once more, thinking there was nothing wrong.

Even now, however, the captives could not escape from the cave, because of the heavy rock which blocked the entrance and which their united efforts could not stir; and so they were compelled to wait until morning, when the blinded giant rolled the rock away, and sat at the entrance to count his sheep as they passed through, feeling the woolly back of each as it went by. Seeing this, the cunning Ulysses whispered instructions to his companions each to cling fast to the wool on the under side of a sheep—all the members of the flock being of great size—and thus the captives escaped from the cave without the knowledge of Polyphemus.

Quickly they hastened to their moored vessel; and, finding that the weather was calm once more, they hastened on board and set sail at once. Hearing the noise of embarkation and the derisive cheers of the adventurers, Polyphemus rushed to the shore and blindly hurled huge rocks after them; but though one of the missiles narrowly missed hitting the vessel, Ulysses and his companions quickly sailed out of reach and thus escaped this second terrible danger.

As the wanderers navigated the islands in the neighbourhood of Sicily, they came to the isle where dwelt Æolus, the god of the winds, who was one of the happiest of rulers. Jupiter had given him the command of all the winds that blow, which he kept enclosed in a mountain, letting them out as he judged fit.

Having met with so many misfortunes upon his journey, Ulysses landed in the isle, and entreated the god of the winds to deal more kindly by him, and to give him calm sailing for the rest of his voyage; and Æolus, feeling that he had indeed tried the patience of this mighty hero very sorely, now willingly agreed to assist him. He therefore gave him a number of bags in which were enclosed all the adverse winds he would otherwise have had to meet upon his journey; and Ulysses thanked Æolus for his handsome gift, and returned to his vessel with the precious bags. Unhappily, however, some of the seamen, unable to repress their curiosity regarding the strange bags brought on board by their leader, and suspecting that they contained some rich treasure which they were eager to share, secretly opened the bundles—with the result that all the contrary winds escaped, and blew in great fury around the vessel, so that it was nearly wrecked at that particular time; and later on the adverse winds returned so many times to drive the ship out of her course that Ulysses and his companions were kept wandering about from place to place month after month, several times even approaching quite near to the shores of Ithaca, but being driven away again by the contrary winds into strange regions.

On one occasion they were stranded in the beautiful island of Ææa, which was, however, an unknown spot to them; and Ulysses gave commands for the vessel to be drawn up high and dry upon the beach, and declared that they should remain in this fair place and rest a while until the winds and waves had abated somewhat.

They feasted that night; and next morning, Ulysses wisely divided his companions into two parties, one of which was to scour the country for news of its inhabitants, whilst the other remained to guard the ship. Ulysses, himself, was the head of one party, whilst his great friend, Eurylochus, was the chief of the other; and they drew lots to decide which party should go forth on scouting duty.

The lot fell to Eurylochus and his party, who set forth at once upon the expedition, leaving Ulysses and his remaining companions to guard the vessel; and the farther they advanced into the country, the fairer they found it, and marvelled at the beauty of the flowers, the richness of the luscious fruits and the sweet singing of the countless birds of brilliant plumage that flew hither and thither in the woods.

They saw no signs of human life, however, until, quite suddenly, they came out into a fairy-like glade, in the midst of which they beheld a splendid palace made of polished stones of many bright colours which sparkled in the sunlight. It was the finest palace they had ever seen; but instead of servants or guards, they saw only beasts penned in the courtyard—lions, wolves, bears, dogs, and many other creatures, all with sad expressions in their eyes, tamely and aimlessly wandering up and down their narrow confines, doing harm to none.

As the wanderers drew nearer to the dazzling palace, however, they heard the sound of such sweet and entrancing singing that they hastened their steps with delight, since the seductive music instantly filled them with eager longing to greet the singer—for this was the palace of Circe, who was the enchantress daughter of Helios, god of the sun, and who, though the wanderers knew it not, was so clever a sorceress that, by means of her magic arts, she changed into the forms of beasts all those travellers whom her sweet singing and enticing beauty lured as victims into her fatal palace.

The enchantress knew well that new victims were even now approaching her abode; and presently she left her loom, where she liked to sit at her work singing all the day, and came forth to bid the strangers welcome and to invite them to enter her palace and to partake of refreshments, since she always had a rich banquet spread for unexpected guests.

So exquisite was the beauty of Circe, and so enthralling her smiles and sweet voice, that the wanderers, unsuspicious of evil, readily fell under the spell of her wonderful fascination; and they all entered the palace, with the exception of Eurylochus, their leader, who had doubts of the fair Queen's sincerity and refused to accept her invitation, warning his companions to resist the temptation also. The travel-worn wanderers, however, laughed at his fears; and, leaving him without, they entered the palace and eagerly partook of the fine feast spread out for them, Circe cunningly pressing upon them the enchanted meats and wines she had prepared against their arrival, rejoicing at the ease with which she had secured these new victims.

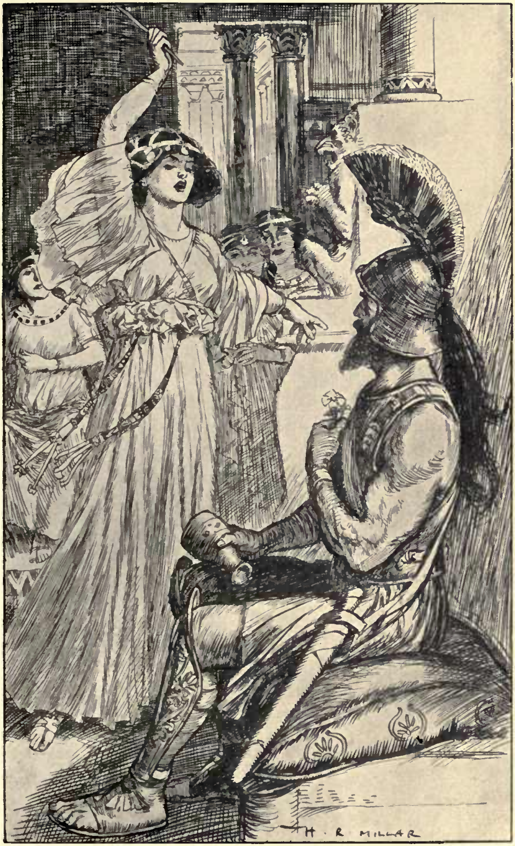
When the feast came to an end, however, her alluring smiles quickly vanished; and waving her magic wand over the revellers, she cried in harsh tones: " Take ye on the form of swine, ye gluttons, and begone to the sty, which henceforth shall be your home!"

Instantly the wayfarers were transformed into swine, and were driven by the sorceress to the sty, where they pined in misery—for, though they had the appearance of hairy swine, they retained their human minds, and were fully aware of the degradation to which they had been reduced by their own foolishly-careless conduct.

Meanwhile Eurylochus had waited in vain for the return of his companions; and when presently all signs of mirth within the palace died away, and a sudden ominous silence reigned, he knew that magic was at work, and hastening back with all speed to the vessel, he entreated Ulysses to leave these enchanted shores at once, since, though he knew not what had befallen his companions, he believed that some trouble had come to them.

But Ulysses heeded not the entreaties of Eurylochus; and, buckling on his sword, he hastened alone towards the palace of the sorceress queen, determined to compel her to deliver up his followers. As he hurried through the woods, he was again suddenly accosted by the god Mercury, who appeared thus a second time to bring him words of warning and assistance from Minerva, the protectress of heroes; and from the bright messenger of the gods he learned the name and character of the queen of the enchanted palace, and of the transformation she had wrought in his companions by means of her magic arts.

Ulysses was filled with woe on hearing this



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CIRCE ATTEMPTS TO ENCHANT ULYSSES

bad news; but Mercury plucked up a certain plant from the ground, which he named *Moly*, and, giving it to the unhappy hero, said: "If thou keepest this plant in thine hand, oh Ulysses, beloved of the gods, the charms and spells of Circe can harm thee not, and thou mayest safely eat of the viands she offers thee; and when she waves her wand over thee, rush upon her instantly with thy sword and compel her to restore thy companions."

So Ulysses went boldly to the palace of Circe; and craftily pretending to yield to her soft enticements, he allowed her to draw him into her banqueting-hall and feasted upon her enchanted meats, which had no ill-effect upon him, since he kept fast hold of the plant *Moly*. When, however, at the end of the feast the sorceress raised her wand and uttered the words of enchantment, he rushed upon her with his drawn sword and sternly bade her to withdraw the spell from his companions; and Circe, realizing that she had met her match and that the gods were on the side of this bold hero, was compelled to obey his command. Therefore she restored the hairy swine in her sty to their true forms once more; and having thus satisfied Ulysses, she next cunningly tried to beguile the hero by her many fascinations to remain with her as her husband, since she had already fallen in love with him.

So well did Circe succeed with her allurements that Ulysses was unable to resist this gentler spell she laid upon him; and thus he remained with her for a year, as she desired. A little prince, who received the name of Telegonus, was born to the pair; and then Ulysses suddenly released himself from the snares of Circe, and, calling his faithful companions together once more, bade farewell to the sorceress and boarded his vessel.

Circe, finding that her wiles were no longer strong enough to keep this mighty hero by her side in idleness, parted from him with friendliness, and even warned him of a terrible danger he would presently have to encounter upon his further journey. This danger spot was the island of Pelorus, where dwelt the Sirens—three lovely sea nymphs, even more beautiful and fascinating than Circe herself—who enticed all mariners on to the dangerous rocks around their abode, and filled them with such eager longing to draw nearer that they would spring over the sides of their vessels into the foaming sea, to perish miserably in the waves or to die of hunger upon the barren shore. No man once hearing the thrilling song of the Sirens had ever yet been able to resist it, so that travellers always endeavoured to avoid the spot; but Ulysses and his companions had come so far out of their course that they were compelled to pass by the fatal island on their journey back to Ithaca.

"But," added Circe, "thou mayest escape the danger by stopping up the ears of thy followers with wax, so that they may not hear the magic music. But do not stop up thine own ears, I entreat thee; for if but one traveller can hear that thrilling song, and yet pass by the island unharmed, the spell of the Sirens will be broken for ever and they will die. Therefore, that thou mayest benefit all other voyagers who shall come after thee, cause thyself to be bound fast to the mast of thy vessel with leathern thongs; and then, though the magic singing of the Sirens enthrals thee to distraction, yet shalt thou be prevented from yielding to their tempting invitation to destruction—and their spell will be broken for ever."

Gladly Ulysses availed himself of the warning and advice of Circe; and on approaching the islands of the Sirens, he closed up the ears of his companions with wax and caused himself to be bound with leathern thongs fast to the mast of the ship, having first commanded all to pay no heed should he entreat them to set him at liberty, but to ply their oars without ceasing until the island faded out of sight and the fatal music could no longer be heard.

Then, as the enchanted island came in sight and the entrancing song of the Sirens came to the ears of Ulysses, the hero passed through hours of agony; for he longed desperately to cast himself into the sea and to reach the three beautiful enchantresses, whose alluring forms he could now plainly see. But though he struggled like a wild beast and called out furiously for release, his faithful companions paid no heed to him, but plied their oars continuously, oblivious to his cries and to the magic strains of music, which they could not hear because of the wax in their ears; and not until the fatal island had faded from sight and Ulysses had signified that he could no longer hear the enticing music, did they unbind the exhausted hero.

Thus did the wayfarers pass safely beyond the rocks of the Sirens, who could now no longer lure men to destruction, since, one traveller having heard their magic song and yet passed by unharmed, their doom was sealed; but many more dangers and adventures were in store for the hero of Troy.

So full of despair did Ulysses become, owing to the contrary winds which still drove him away from his own land, that he even left his ship for a season, and made the terrible journey alone to the under-world, in order to consult the shade of Tiresias, who had been a famous soothsayer on earth, whom he begged to foretell whether it was ordained that he should ever set foot in Ithaca again; and on learning from Tiresias that he certainly would do so, he quickly returned to the earth and boarded his vessel with renewed hope, patiently enduring the many more severe trials that beset him.

At one time the battered vessel was in danger of being shipwrecked altogether when making the passage between two terrible rocks known as Scylla and Charybdis, on each of which dwelt a fearful she-monster. Whirlpools abounded in this spot, and the sea between the two rocks was so narrow that the voyagers had to exercise the greatest caution lest, whilst avoiding Scylla, they should founder upon Charybdis; but after many narrow escapes, they managed to steer a middle course through this dangerous passage.

Then, unhappily, the companions of Ulysses, on landing upon a certain shore, and being hungry, happened to kill some oxen sacred to the god Apollo, who, as a punishment, caused their vessel to be shipwrecked and utterly destroyed when next they set sail; and none escaped alive from the wreck save Ulysses, who, not having touched the sacred oxen, was permitted to make his escape from the seething waves, and was cast up, exhausted, upon the island of Ogygia.

This island was ruled over by a fair nymph named Calypso, who, upon Ulysses being brought to her abode, fell in love with him and promised him immortality if he would marry her. But Ulysses could not forget his beloved Penelope, whom he still loved dearly and longed to greet once more; and he refused the request of Calypso, who, nevertheless, held him captive for seven years, that she might enjoy his society. At the end of that time Jupiter intervened, and sent Mercury with a command to Calypso to let Ulysses go free; and the nymph was compelled to obey, though she afterwards died of grief for the loss of her beloved hero.

Ulysses now made himself a raft, and voyaged forth once more; but his frail craft was not strong enough to carry him far, and he was soon compelled to take refuge upon the island of Scheria. where he was rescued by Nausicaa, the princess of that island, who, on learning his sad story and feeling pity for him, persuaded her father, King Alcinous, to provide the hero with a strong vessel in which he might continue his journey with safety. Alcinous willingly did so; and thus, owing to the kindness of this good king and his gracious daughter, Ulysses set forth yet once again in a noble ship, in which, with the aid of the gentler winds which now were permitted to favour him, he came at last within sight of his own beloved land, Ithaca, after having been a wanderer for twenty long weary years.

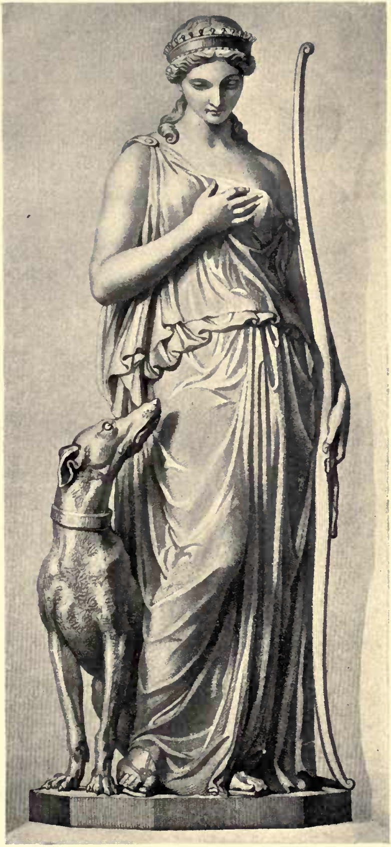
Ulysses landed in a lonely part of the shore; and wishing to learn the latest tidings before revealing his identity to anyone, he disguised himself as a beggar, and went to the cottage of an old swineherd, named Eumæus, who received him kindly, and with whom he entered into conversation; and from this old man he learnt that the palace was besieged with suitors clamouring for the hand of his wife, Queen Penelope, who, faithful to her lost husband, and still believing that he would one day return to her, had declined to wed with anyone else. Her refusal, however, only made the eager suitors more clamorous still; and the harassed Queen now had the greatest difficulty in keeping herself from being stolen away by one or another of her rude admirers.

Whilst Ulysses spoke thus with the old swineherd, a handsome young man entered the cottage, in company with an older man, whom the returned King immediately recognized as his own old friend, Mentor, a noble and faithful lord to whom he had entrusted the affairs of his kingdom on setting out for the siege of Troy; and he also now realized with deep emotion that the splendid youth before him was none other than his own beloved son, Telemachus, whom he had last seen as a babe twenty years ago.

From the talk of these two new-comers, Ulysses learnt that Telemachus had just returned from a long journey he had undertaken in search of his lost father, and that the faithful Mentor had accompanied him as constant adviser and leader; and, unable to repress his natural feelings any longer, the returned hero now revealed himself as the long-lost Ulysses, and embraced both Telemachus and Mentor with great joy.

After this happy meeting it became necessary to think out a scheme for relieving the troubles of the distressed Queen; and on learning further from the old swineherd that Penelope at last had been compelled to promise her hand to the suitor who could shoot an arrow from the powerful bow of her lost husband, Ulysses made his way to the palace at once, still in disguise, in order to take part in the competition.

Meanwhile poor Penelope was in a very unhappy position; for she felt that with no one to protect her—the young Prince Telemachus and the faithful Mentor being still absent—she would indeed be compelled to give herself to one of the rough suitors, each one of whom desired to marry her that he might sit upon the throne as king. For a long time she had managed to put them off by declaring that she would select one of them to be her husband as soon as she had finished a robe she was making for Laertes, the aged father of Ulysses. This, however, was only a ruse; for every night she unravelled the cloth she had woven during the day. For many months, nevertheless, the suitors were deceived by this trick, since they themselves could see the industrious Queen sitting daily at her loom, weaving the cloth, which they spoke of as "Penelope's Web"; but at last her secret was betrayed by one of her own handmaidens, and then she was filled with fear and knew not what to do in order to defend herself, for she still dearly loved her long-lost husband, believing firmly that he would return



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PENELOPE

(C 718) After the statue by R. J. Wyatt

to her some day, and she desired to live for that happy hour.

The ruse of "Penelope's Web" had just been discovered the day before the landing of Ulysses; and in order to save herself a little longer, Penelope had agreed to bestow her hand and the vacant throne upon that suitor who could shoot with the great bow of Ulysses, knowing well that none of them had the strength to bend it and that she would thus gain a little additional time.

Next day, however, the rough suitors all poured once more into the courtyard of the palace, eager to shoot with the bow of the lost King, whilst the pale-faced, though still beautiful Penelope stood by, trembling, to watch the result. But none of the competitors could even bend the bow, much less shoot forth an arrow from it; and an angry murmuring began to arise amongst them, which boded ill for the unhappy Penelope, when suddenly a stranger, clad in the torn garments of a beggar and with a ragged cloak wrapped half across his face, stood forth and took up the bow, slinging the quiver of arrows over his shoulder. Lovingly he fingered the good bow, and then, with a proud, stern glance around, he fitted an arrow to the cord, and pulled the mighty weapon with the greatest ease. Away sped the arrow—into the heart of one of the traitors who had dared to importune the faithful Queen of Ithaca; and others quickly followed with unerring aim, until all the clamorous self-seekers lay dead upon the ground.

Then Ulysses flung aside his disguising cloak, and all the people gazed with amazement upon the noble king who had left them twenty years ago to gain glory at the siege of Troy; and the virtuous Penelope was quickly clasped in her long-lost husband's loving embrace, whilst old Laertes tottered forward to bless his beloved son once more.

Joy now reigned in Ithaca at the return of the honoured King; and Ulysses ruled his people in happiness and wisdom for sixteen prosperous years.

Then at the end of that time the mighty hero met his death with tragic suddenness at the hands of his own son. It will be remembered that, when living under the alluring spells of the charmer, Circe, the latter had borne to Ulysses a son, who was named Telegonus; and when this prince had grown up to be a fine youth, the enchantress sent him forth to seek out his hero-father, that he might join him in great enterprises. Young Telegonus, eager also to greet his father, needed no second bidding; but as he neared the coast of Ithaca his vessel encountered a terrific storm and was cast upon the shores.

Telegonus and his companions escaped injury, and continued the journey on foot; and being pressed by hunger, they entered the cornfields and orchards and began to plunder these for food as they went along.

News of the strangers who were plundering his fields came quickly to the ears of Ulysses, the King, who, with his son, Telemachus, hastened out with his servants to punish the intruders, who gave battle to them in return. In the struggle that ensued the impetuous young Telegonus rushed with drawn sword upon Ulysses, and, having no knowledge of his identity or that he was the hero-father whom he had travelled so far to seek, ran him through the body.

Thus fell Ulysses, the mighty in battle, the fearless in danger, the crafty in counsel, the cunning in artifice, who was patient in adversity, triumphed over evil, and who believed in the goodness of the gods—slain, unwittingly, by the hands of his own son; and as the brightness of his fair daytime faded into the violet duskiness of night, then came fleet-footed Mercury, the messenger of the gods, who conducted that dauntless spirit to the Land of Shades, there to dwell for evermore in the Elysian fields with those other well-beloved heroes who had also trod the paths of undying glory on earth, and were already waiting to greet him on the other side.

The Wanderings of Æneas

Next to the noble Hector, Æneas was the greatest and most splendid of the warrior princes who fought on the side of King Priam during the Trojan War. His father was Anchises, one of the handsome shepherd princes of Dardanus on Mount Ida, his mother being Venus, the goddess of love and beauty; and from his birth the young hero was beloved of the gods and honoured by men.

When war against Troy was declared by the Greek princes, Æneas and his father, Anchises, at once went to join their forces with those of King Priam, to whom they were related, setting up their households in the doomed city; so that, when the siege of Troy began, they were ready to assist in the defence. Anchises was already too old to take any great part in the daily warfare; but Æneas soon proved himself worthy in every way to be the companion leader of the brave Hector, and many mighty deeds of valour were performed by him during the ten years' siege. Into every possible danger spot of the battle the fearless hero went, fighting like a lion; and many times he narrowly escaped death only by the miraculous intervention of the gods, who held him under their special protection.

Once when Æneas was engaged in a struggle with the Greek hero, Diomedes, Venus, fearful for her beloved son's safety, suddenly appeared and carried him off in her chariot amidst a dense cloud. Another time, heading a sortie out of the besieged city, he was attacked furiously on the shore by the mighty Achilles, who was on the point of killing him, when Neptune, the god of the seas, arose from the waves and thrust aside the Greek hero, so that his prey escaped him.

When, finally, after the death of gallant Hector, Troy was taken by means of the introduction of the Greek warriors encased in the famous wooden horse designed by the crafty Ulysses, Æneas again escaped death by miraculous means. When the wooden horse had been drawn into the city, the Trojans, successfully deceived into regarding it as a sacred gift for the gods, feasted and rejoiced for the remainder of that fateful day; and it was not until all the revellers had retired to rest that, in the dead of night, the imprisoned Greeks were liberated from the hollow interior of the great image by their spy, Sinon. He had allowed himself to be taken captive into the city beforehand for this purpose, and, the gates being opened to the main host outside, the Greeks quickly swarmed all over the city, and, setting fire to the public buildings, lost no time in carrying out their dreadful work of pillage and destruction.

Whilst these terrible events were happening under cover of the darkness, Æneas was sleeping in his father's house, which lay on the edge of the city; but suddenly there appeared to him the apparition of Hector, who warned him to arise at once and fly, since the enemy was within the gates.

Æneas sprang hastily from his couch to find the words of the spectre only too true, since cries of despair and anguish reached him on every side, and the light of the burning city was already piercing the gloomy curtain of night; and though he rushed forth madly to gather his scattered warriors together, he quickly found that his brave efforts were of no avail to save the city. When he reached the palace, it was only to behold the slaying of King Priam at the hands of his enemies; and Queen Hecuba and her daughters and many other groups of wailing women and children were already being led away as captives.

Seeing that all hope of saving the doomed city was past, Æneas was about to give himself up to despair, when his divine mother, the goddess Venus, appeared before him and bade him seek out his beloved ones and escape from Troy whilst there was yet time to do so, and to wander forth towards new scenes, since the gods had need of his services elsewhere.

So Æneas, ever obedient to his goddess mother's commands, hastened back to his home with all speed, that he might save those dependent upon him from the terrible dangers that surrounded them; and, bearing his aged father, Anchises, upon his own strong back, and leading his young son, Ascanius, by the hand, followed by his trembling wife, Creusa, the unhappy hero threaded a difficult way through the burning streets, and at length reached safely a sheltered spot outside the city gates.

Then as he set down his living burden upon the ground, Æneas discovered, to his horror, that his beloved wife was missing, having evidently been separated from him by the crowds of despairing folk they had encountered, who were also making frantic efforts to escape; and, distracted with grief, he rushed back into the burning city to seek for her. As he called out her name in agonized accents, the shade of Creusa—who had already been slain by the foe—appeared before his despairing eyes, gently bidding him to cease his useless search, since it was the will of the gods that she must even now depart to the under-world. Then, further prophesying that her beloved hero-husband would eventually find a safe haven in the fair but distant land of Hesperia—later on called Italia—where he would be the founder of a mighty kingdom, the apparition vanished as the grief-stricken beholder vainly endeavoured to embrace the ethereal shape.

So Æneas returned with a heavy heart to the sheltered vale where he had left his aged father and little son, and where he now found that a large number of other Trojan refugees had also assembled; and placing himself at the head of the company as their leader, he first of all led them forth to find a temporary refuge amidst the sheltered groves of Mount Ida, where they passed the winter. Then, finally, in the spring-time they all set forth in goodly vessels to seek adventures and new homes in foreign lands.

The first shores touched by the homeless wanderers were those of Thrace, a country formerly on friendly terms with Troy; and here Æneas gave instructions to his followers to begin the building of a city, forgetful, for the moment, that it had been ordained by the gods—as foretold to him by his wife's spirit on the night he left Troy—that he was to be the founder of a mighty nation in distant Hesperia; but being warned by the spectral voice of one of the dead Trojan princes speaking to him from the roots of a myrtle bush having leaves and boughs from which blood oozed forth, to fly from a land in which crime was rife—the unhappy prince himself having been done to death in that spot—the hero quickly departed with his forces from those ill-fated shores, and set sail once more.

Æneas now sought advice from the oracle at Delos, which confirmed the prophecy of his wife's shade, that he should found a great nation in the land from whence his earliest ancestors had sprung;

and after consulting with Anchises, Æneas came to the conclusion that Crete must be the promised land, and forthwith he and his friends voyaged to this fair island. Here, also, they began to lay the foundations of a city; but soon a terrible pestilence came amongst the workers, which warned them that this land was not intended to be their resting-place.

Æneas then learnt definitely, by means of a vivid dream, that Italia was the country where the gods had ordained that he should settle down, and where the descendants of his race should become the greatest nation of their time; and therefore the travellers embarked once more, intending to sail for that then scarce-known land in the west. Owing to contrary winds, the vessels were several times driven inshore; and various adventures befell the voyagers on landing.

Once when they had spread a meal for themselves upon a lonely shore, where they had taken temporary refuge, their food was snatched away from them by the Harpies—three horrible monsters, half women and half birds of loathsome appearance—who suddenly swooped down upon them. When, after spreading out a fresh meal, the Harpies were seen about to swoop down a second time, the refugees succeeded in beating them off; but one of the thwarted monsters croaked out a dismal prophecy from a neighbouring rock, declaring that though the wanderers should certainly establish a famous city in Italia, it would not be until they had suffered such dire famine as would compel them to devour their tables as well as the food placed upon them—all this because they had refused food to the winged monsters.

Alarmed by this unpleasant incident, Æneas and his companions left that ill-omened shore as soon as the storm would permit them to do so; and, with foreboding of ills to follow, they proceeded gloomily upon their way.

At Epirus, their next stopping-place, however, they were greatly cheered by finding that a Trojan king ruled there, whom they presently recognized with joy as Helenus, the soothsayer son of King Priam; and here, also, they found the Princess Andromache, the widow of noble Hector, who had now become the Queen of Helenus, with whom she had been taken as a slave to Epirus, the death of the King having since resulted in the pair of royal exiles being chosen to rule the land.

As the voyagers drew nearer to the coast of Italia, they touched upon a lonely part of the shores of Sicily, where, after having rescued a man of Ithaca, who had been left there accidentally by Ulysses and his companions, they were attacked by Polyphemus and the other Cyclops who dwelt there, who plunged into the sea and hurled great rocks and stones at their ships.

They escaped from these fierce giants, however, without harm; and then, whilst resting for a short time at Drepanium, in the west of the island, a new trouble awaited Æneas, for here, bowed down with his weight of years and troubles, the aged Anchises fell ill and died.

After the funeral games in connection with the death of Anchises had been celebrated, Æneas and his followers once more continued their journey; and then, as they were at last drawing near to the sunny shore of Italy, disaster met them again. The goddess Juno had no love for Æneas, since she had ever favoured the Greeks and troubled the Trojans; and besides this, she did not desire the Trojan hero to found a city in Italia, since she knew that if that city were founded, it would gain such mighty power that it would even subdue the famous city of Carthage on the coast of Africa, which city the goddess specially favoured, and where she was worshipped with peculiar honours. The jealous Juno therefore persuaded Æolus, the god of the winds, to assist her; and, at her request, the latter caused such a terrific tempest to arise that the vessels of Æneas and his followers were driven roughly out of their course and turned towards the coast of Africa, several of them being dashed to pieces on the rocks. Then Neptune, who loved Æneas well, rose in wrath from the depths of the ocean, and prevented further disaster from overtaking the unhappy Trojans by sternly commanding the contrary winds to return to Æolus, and by thus calming the mountainous waves; and as the storm subsided, the battered vessels were steered to the nearest shore—which happened to be that of the famous city of Carthage, beloved by Juno—and here the wanderers flung down their weary bodies to rest, thankful to have escaped from this last terrible danger.

Having recovered somewhat from the buffeting they had received, Æneas and his companions set forth to enter the noble city of Carthage; and on the way from the shore the beautiful goddess Venus appeared again before her son with words of comfort and encouragement, promising him a kindly reception in the land where he had now taken refuge.

Hearing of the arrival of the strangers in the city, Dido, the beautiful Queen of Carthage, came forth from her palace to meet them and to bid them welcome to her shores; and after giving instructions for the wanderers to be cared for in a generous manner, she herself led Æneas to lodge in her own gorgeous palace, where she entertained him with the utmost honour and favour.

When he had rested for a few days and had recovered from his recent alarms and hardships, Æneas was taken into the presence of Dido, who invited him to relate to her the story of his adventures at the siege of Troy, and also of all that had befallen him since he set forth upon his wanderings; and as the fair Queen listened with rapt attention to the glowing tales told by her visitor, her heart went out to the splendid hero who had performed so many glorious deeds, and she grew to love him so dearly that she could not bear to think of the time when he must leave her to follow the destiny ordained for him by the gods. She endeavoured, therefore, to interest him in her city, and to entertain him with constant feastings and delightful pastimes, hoping that he would at last become so attached to this pleasant resting-place that he would be willing to reign there with her as the King of Carthage.

But though Æneas was for a long time well content to sit at the feet of beautiful Dido and to relate to her the stories she loved so well to hear, and to show pleasure in the many signs of affection and favour which she showered upon him, he was not permitted to forget the wishes of the gods; and at last Jupiter, growing impatient of his chosen hero's dallying amidst the soft pleasures of love and peaceful luxury, sent his fleet-footed messenger, Mercury, to command him to leave the bright abode of Queen Dido and to set forth once more upon his journey to Italia.

When Æneas heard the command brought by Mercury, all his eagerness to become the founder of a mighty city returned; and, forgetful of the words of love he had spoken to the beautiful

Queen of Carthage, he gave orders for his ships—which had been repaired whilst in the harbour of the famous city—to be prepared for departure on the morrow.

However, when Dido knew of her beloved guest's decision, she was filled with despair; and after, in her anger and disappointment, first upbraiding him for his cruelty in thus attempting to desert one who loved him so dearly, she next implored him to remain with her as her king.

It was with conflicting feelings, therefore, that Æneas retired to his couch that night; and he might even yet have yielded to the dictates of his heart had not Mercury again visited him, bidding him now to set sail at once before the dawn, since the Queen of Carthage would endeavour to prevent his departure on the morrow.

So Æneas crept stealthily out of the palace in the dead of night, and joined his companions already gathered upon the vessels waiting for daylight to appear; and he then commanded them to loose the cables, and thus left the shores of Carthage without further delay.

When the lovelorn Dido next morning beheld the quickly-vanishing vessels of the Trojans upon the horizon, she was filled with such grief and despair that she determined to live no longer, since her lover had thus deserted her. She therefore caused a funeral pyre to be built, upon which she mounted, clad in the same robes which she had worn when first she beheld Æneas; and, plunging a sword into her breast, the unhappy Queen expired, with her beloved hero's name upon her lips.

Although Æneas had played by no means a noble part in this last adventure, his future exploits gained him much glory and renown. After meeting with further troubles on his journey, as the Trojan hero once more approached the shores of Italia, he was visited one night by a strange dream, in which he beheld the shade of his father, Anchises, who commanded him to seek out a certain prophetess, or soothsayer, known as the Cumæan Sibyl, who would foretell to him his future and also conduct him to the under-world, where Anchises himself would speak with him again upon many important matters.

No sooner had he touched upon the shores of Italia, therefore, than Æneas sought out the Sibyl, who dwelt in a cave on the rocky cliffs of Cumæ, adjoining the splendid temple of Apollo; and here he found the prophetess, who was beautiful but wild and unearthly in her appearance, and who, inspired by the god Apollo, foretold to the Trojan hero that he would yet have to overcome many foes, fight a number of battles, and suffer famine and further hardships before he had fulfilled the command of the gods.

Æneas declared that he was prepared to endure whatever the Fates had in store for him, and announced his willingness even to descend into the Land of Shades in order to carry out the wish of his dead father, who had further revelations to make to him. The Sibyl agreed to accompany him thither, but sent him first to visit the shores of the gloomy Lake Avernus, where in the dark woods that bordered that black pool there grew a certain strange tree upon which flourished a single golden bough, with leaves and twigs of the same precious substance, which he was to pluck, that he might take it as a gift to Proserpina, the Queen of the Under-world.

Æneas, nothing daunted by the difficulties in his path, went boldly to the shores of Lake Avernus, where, in the woods adjoining, he found the magic tree, from which he plucked the golden bough. There he was joined by the Cumæan Sibyl, who, after dismissing his companions, led him to a certain black cavern near by, into the mouth of which they plunged, and soon found themselves in a gloomy passage from whence strange shadowy shapes appeared, and which led, by long devious ways, to the Land of Shades where the dark King Pluto reigned with his beautiful queen, Proserpina.

Before actually entering the Under-world, they had to cross over the black river Styx in the boat of the ferryman, Charon, whose duty it was to ferry across the departed spirits to their everlasting home. Many were the awful sights they beheld and were compelled to pass; and on reaching the gateway to the abode of Pluto, they had first to appease the ferocious three-headed dog, Cerberus, who guarded the gates day and night, and would never have allowed the mortals to pass by had not the Sibyl come prepared for his opposition. She gave Æneas a certain soaked cake to offer to the terrible dog; and when her companion had thrown this sop to Cerberus, they both passed through the gateway in safety.

Had Æneas not possessed a stout heart and fearless courage, he could never have endured the horrors of the Under-world, even with the friendly Sibyl at his side; but though he beheld many sights that wrung his heart, he refrained from giving way to fear, and thus safely passed through all the dangers and woes of Tartarus, the place of punishment for the wicked-doers. In the Fields of Mourning, also, he beheld the shade of Dido, the unhappy Queen of Carthage, who, when he approached to greet her, broke away from him with horror and loathing, and poured wild upbraidings upon him because he had repulsed her love on earth.

It was a pleasant relief, therefore, to pass on into the Elysian fields, or Abode of the Blest, where he met many of the departed heroes who had fought at the siege of Troy, or had gained glory elsewhere. Here, also, he met the shade of

Anchises, who now gave him the further instructions and information he had promised.

In the palace of Pluto Æneas laid at the feet of Proserpina the golden bough he had brought as an offering for the fair Queen; and after bidding farewell to the shade of his father, the Trojan hero was brought back safely to the upper world once more, where the Cumæan Sibyl left him.

After many further adventures, in which the hero and his followers suffered dire famine, Æneas embarked again, and at length reached the eastern shores of the river Tiber, where he landed in Latium, the country of a king named Latinus, whose daughter, Lavinia, had been destined by an oracle to become the bride of a wandering prince; and upon the arrival of the Trojans, their leader, Æneas, was declared to be the stranger foreordained to become the husband of the princess.

Amata, the Queen of Latium, however, had promised her daughter to Turnus, the neighbouring King of Rutuli, who, recognizing a rival in the Trojan refugee, declared war against Latium. Æneas fought bravely on the side of King Latinus, being the hero of many battles; and finally, having overthrown and slain the rival suitor, Turnus, he was married to the Princess Lavinia.

In accordance with his destiny Æneas now founded and built a fine city in that district, which he named Lavinium, in honour of his wife; and it was from the descendants of Æneas Sylvius, his son by Lavinia, that the mighty and famous city of Rome was believed to have been founded, as so long foretold and desired by the gods.

Ascanius, the son of Æneas by his first wife, Creusa, also built the city of Alba Longa, and was regarded as the ancestor of the famous Roman family to which Julius Cæsar belonged.

Æneas had to engage in constant warfare with the Rutulians, by whom he was at length slain; and thus, after a long life of weary wanderings and warfare, did the Trojan hero find comfort and reward in the Elysian fields of the under-world, there at last to dwell in peace and everlasting companionship with the shades of the mighty.

The Story of Echo and Narcissus

You will remember, in the introductory chapter, I told you that most of the higher gods and goddesses of the ancients were attended by lesser female divinities, known as nymphs; and many stories are told of the adventures of some of these beautiful beings.

There was one dainty nymph named Echo, who was such a great chatterbox that she was seldom silent; and her love of talking was the means of bringing a sad misfortune upon her.

Echo was one of the nymphs attending upon Jupiter, the great god-king of Olympus; and it fell to her lot to prove herself of considerable service to her glorious master, although at the same time she brought trouble upon herself.

Jupiter was a great lover of beauty; and it was one of his chief delights to hold converse with the various lovely maidens with whom he came in contact.

This was the cause of much trouble in the abode of the gods; for the beautiful goddess Juno, the Queen of Olympus, was of an exceedingly jealous disposition, and it made her very angry when her lord's roving fancy caused him to wander from her side and to take pleasure also in the beauty of certain dainty nymphs and fair mortal maidens.

One day Jupiter had wandered to the valleys below Olympus, to talk to his nymphs and to join in the merry games they loved to indulge in; and as soon as Juno knew of this, she determined to go down into the valley also and to scold her truant lord should she find him enjoying the company of the nymphs of whom she was so jealous.

When she reached the entrance to the valley, however, she was met by the pretty nymph, Echo, who, guessing what the angry goddess had come for, and good-naturedly wishing to save her companions from trouble, held Juno in conversation, in order to give the other nymphs time to escape and hide themselves.

For quite a long time Echo talked to Juno, chattering like a magpie of everything that came into her mind; and it was no hardship for her to do this, since she dearly loved the sound of her own voice and was never at a loss for something to talk about. It was in vain that Juno tried to pass on; for Echo had so many interesting things to say and talked so incessantly that it was not possible for anyone to interrupt her. So when at last the kindly chatterbox came to a stop for sheer want of breath, and the Queen of Olympus seized the opportunity to rush past her, the valley was found to be deserted; for all the nymphs had managed to escape by this time, and Jupiter himself had vanished also.

Then when Juno realized how she had been tricked, she was full of wrath, and determined to punish the dainty little nymph who had detained her so long at the entrance to the valley with her endless chatter; and so she caused the unfortunate Echo to lose the gift of her proper speech, only permitting her to retain the power to repeat, in a faint, far-away voice, the last words of sentences which she heard other people utter.

Thus did Echo, for her well-meaning deed of kindness, receive unjust punishment; and her sorrow was very great, for it had always been a delight to her to talk and to hear the sound of her own pretty voice. Now she could no longer chatter merrily to her friends, and she had to be contented merely to repeat the last two or three words of their sentences when they spoke to her from a distance. But her friends were very kind to her, and would often call out a greeting from the hillside; and then Echo would look up from the valley where she had chosen to dwell since her misfortune, and gladly repeat the last words of their greeting, full of joy at thus hearing the sound of her own beloved voice once more, faint and unreal though it was.

But a worse sorrow yet was in store for poor Echo; for it was also her sad lot to fall in love with someone who did not return her affection.

There was a certain beautiful youth named Narcissus, said to be the son of the river-god Cephisus and the nymph Liriope, who was possessed of such wonderful graces and such dazzlingly fair looks that every maiden who gazed upon him loved him. But, strange to say, Narcissus himself had a cold heart, and was quite incapable of feeling any love in return for the warm affection bestowed upon him by his numerous admirers; and he did all in his power to escape from them, since he had no desire for their kind attentions and had no love to bestow upon anybody but himself.

Now it happened one day that the lovely nymph Echo met Narcissus as she roamed in her valley, and no sooner had she beheld the marvellous beauty of the youth than she straightway fell in love with him so deeply that she felt she could not bear him to be out of her sight. Therefore she followed him about wherever he went; and since she could not declare her love, for lack of the power of speech which had been taken away from her by the goddess Juno, she clung about him, and twined her dainty arms around his neck, and tried to entice him to kiss her.

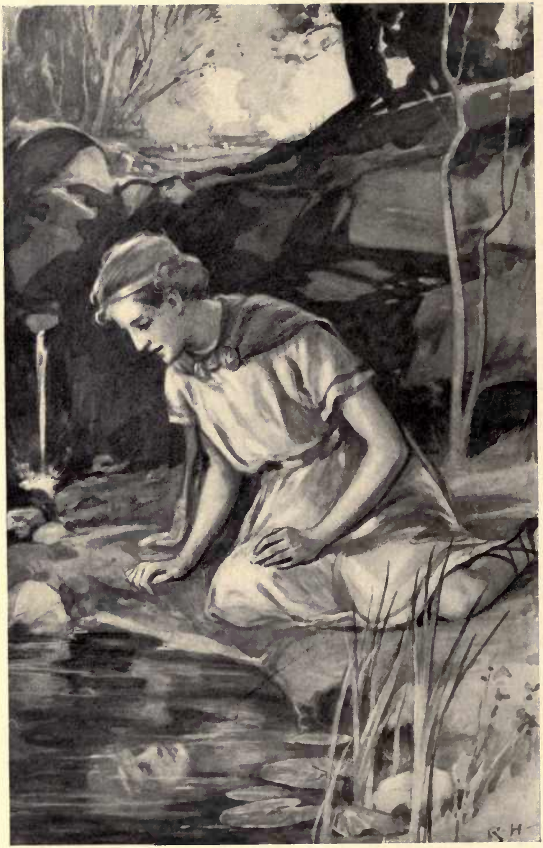
But these unmistakable signs of love only made Narcissus full of anger, since the charms of the pretty nymph were nothing to him; and he would thrust her away from him quite roughly, and rush from her presence, unkindly calling out to her to keep out of his way. The unhappy Echo, fondly repeating his last words in her faint, sad voice, would, nevertheless, still follow the beautiful youth, only to be repulsed again when she succeeded in entwining her clinging arms around him once more.

At last the love-sick nymph, realizing that her tender love was quite in vain, hid herself in the woods, and, overcome with hopelessness, gradually wasted and pined away with grief, so that at length, nothing remained but her voice, which still repeated the last words of greetings called out by the shepherds and wanderers on the hillsides and in rocky places. Even now if you call out a greeting from the valley beneath any hillside, the last words of your sentence will be repeated in the faint, far-away voice of Echo, the unhappy nymph who pined away and died of grief because of her hopeless love for the beautiful youth Narcissus.

Strange to say, the cold-hearted Narcissus himself came also to a sad and lonely end, meeting almost precisely the same fate as that which he had caused to befall the pretty nymph whose love he had despised, and whom he had cast from him with scorn; and this fate was sent upon him by Nemesis, the Goddess of Reward and Punishment, because of the selfishness of his heart.

It happened that, one day, being overheated in the chase, Narcissus made his way to a deep pool of water in order to quench his thirst; and as he stooped down to drink, he suddenly caught sight of his image reflected in the clear water below, and was so overcome with surprise and delight at the sight of his own marvellous beauty that he could not take his eyes off the fair picture that met them.

The longer Narcissus gazed into the pool, the more fascinated he became; and at length he fell so passionately in love with his own beautiful face that nothing could tear him away from the spot. He who had turned aside with disdain from all the



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NARCISSUS FALLS IN LOVE WITH HIS OWN IMAGE pretty maidens who had pursued him, and had scorned the adoration of the loving nymph, Echo, now felt the pangs of love himself for the first time, and he longed passionately to clasp the object of his affection in his arms. Only a little water separated him from those lovely features, and he was just about to plunge into the pool to seize his prize, when he suddenly realized that he was gazing upon the image of himself, and that he had fallen in love with his own beautiful face.

But although he fully realized the utter foolishness of his strange, mad passion, he could not conquer it; and, disregarding the pangs of hunger that presently began to assail him, and forgetful of everything save the love that consumed him, Narcissus remained beside the pool, gazing with rapture upon the reflection of himself in the water below, and sighing with despair because he could not clasp that elusive shadow in his outstretched arms.

So deep was this passion for his own fair looks, and so strong the power of love, that he could not resist it; and so, by degrees, Narcissus the beautiful—like the dainty nymph whom he had scorned—gradually wasted and pined away, dying, alas, for love of himself.

Then when the fair youth had breathed his last, the gods, in pity for his sad fate, renewed life in him by transforming his wasted body into a beautiful, sweet-scented flower that ever afterwards bore his name, and which blossomed year after year on the banks of the pool of water into the clear depths of which he had gazed so long at that lovely reflection of himself which had brought him to so sad an end.

Atalanta's Race

In the beautiful land of Arcadia there dwelt a king named Jasus, who was not happy. Although he ruled over the fairest of lands, where it was always so warm and sunny that flowers, fruits, and corn grew in plenty, and where the people were full of contentment as they lived the simple lives of shepherds, there was yet one thing that made him sad.

He had no son to reign after him; and it made King Jasus very unhappy to think that when he died a stranger might come to rule over his beloved people.

At last, however, a little child was born to Queen Clymene of Arcadia; but instead of being pleased, the King was more aggrieved than ever, because the royal baby was a girl, instead of the boy he had desired.

Having made up his mind that a prince was the only child he would have, the disappointed King determined not to allow the little girl born to him to remain in the palace; and, therefore, one dark night he carried away the baby princess—who had already been given the name of Atalanta—far out into the wildest part of the country, and left her alone on a hillside, hoping that he would never see her again.

As he turned aside, however, the moonlight shone brightly upon the little maid, and he saw that she was very fair to look upon; and though he endeavoured to drive out all recollection of her as the months and years went by, he never could do so, since the picture of her pretty face and the sound of her plaintive cries seemed constantly in his mind.

After a while he wished he had not been so cruel as to cast her out, and longed intensely to find her again; but for many years he had to live without his child, and so grew more melancholy than ever, as he felt she must have perished.

But all this time the Princess Atalanta was alive and well; for she had been found on the hillside by a friendly she-bear, who had carried away the royal baby to her cave to be brought up with her own little cubs.

Atalanta soon grew to love the baby bears, and used to play merry games with them as soon as she could walk; and she remained in the cave with these strange companions and protectors for several months. Then she was discovered by some shepherds, who took her away from the cave; and she lived with these kindly country folk for many happy years.

Atalanta grew up to be a very beautiful maiden; and she was so strong and such a swift runner that she often went out hunting with her simple friends. There was no one more fleet of foot than Atalanta in all the countryside; and it was one of her greatest joys to run races with other maidens and youths, since no one could outstrip her in the foot-race.

So confident was Atalanta of her powers of running that she even ventured to take part in the Calydonian boar-hunt, the story of which is as follows: King Œneus of Calydon, having offended Diana, the goddess of Hunting and Purity, the latter sent a terribly fierce wild boar to ravage his land; and such havoc was wrought that the King's son, Meleager, organized a mighty hunting-party in order to catch and slay the cruel beast, many of the most famous heroes of Greece joining in the chase. With them also came the fearless maiden Atalanta, who did excellent service in racing after the monster, and was the first to succeed in wounding it. After an intensely exciting chase, the boar was finally captured and slain by Meleager, who presented its hide to Atalanta as a reward for having been the first to wound it—he having fallen in love with the maiden, who, however, did not return his affection.

Strange to say, one day, soon after the famous boar hunt, Atalanta was again seen by King Jasus, who at once recognized her as his long-lost daughter, and was filled with joy at thus recovering her; and then Atalanta had to bid farewell to her shepherd friends, and went away with her royal father to dwell in his palace and to take her rightful place as the Princess of Arcadia.

But though the royal maiden now had great riches, she did not at first enjoy her new luxurious life so much as her father had hoped she would; and many times she felt melancholy and wished to return to the hills and countryside once more.

The splendid palace and the crowds of richly-dressed courtiers made her afraid to dance and sing as she had done so freely in the presence of her simple shepherd friends; and she was so shy and reserved that when the gay lords and ladies came up to speak to her, she would often run away from them. Or, if the King bade her remain, she would droop her head and shake down her long sunny hair, so that her fair face was quite hidden from view; and it was only after a great deal of coaxing that anybody could get her to talk at all.

Naturally, this conduct did not please the gay young lords and gallant princes who visited the court, many of whom were in love with her and wished to marry her, since she was the most beautiful princess of her time; and, consequently, when they found that Atalanta tried to hide herself away from them, they promptly sought the King and asked his help in the matter.

"The beautiful Princess Atalanta is so disdainful that she will not listen to us when we tell her that we love her," they complained, in aggrieved tones. "Many days we do not even get a glimpse of her, because she keeps to her chamber, or plays with little children in her garden; and if we *do* happen to meet her outside, she runs away at once, and is so fleet of foot that we cannot ever catch her."

"Be patient with her, my sons," replied King Jasus. "The maiden is shy and afraid of strangers, having lived with simple shepherd folk so long. But it is my desire that she should marry; and, therefore, I will speak to her, and bid her choose one of you as her husband."

But when Atalanta knew that her father wished her to marry one of his courtiers, she was filled with alarm, and cried out in distress: "Oh no, no, no, my dear father! I will run away from them every time they seek me, and they shall never catch me."

Instead of being angry on hearing this, the words of Atalanta gave a sudden bright idea to the King; and he said: "Since thou art so skilful in the foot-race, my daughter, suppose thou runnest races with these eager suitors? If one of them should win, then thou shalt promise to marry him;

but if thou art the winner thyself, then shalt thou remain free. Does this plan satisfy thee, my child?"

"Oh yes, yes, my royal father!" cried Atalanta gleefully, clapping her hands, and now all smiles again. "It is quite safe for me to agree to thy suggestion, for I know that there is no youth in the world so fleet of foot as I am. Let who will come forward to race with me; but I know already that none of the competitors will win me as a prize, since I cannot fail to outstrip them all."

But the King of Arcadia had also thought out another cunning scheme, since he really wished his daughter to marry; and, therefore, in order to make the young men run more swiftly than they had ever done in their lives before, he commanded that each competitor who lost the race should be put to death, since he declared the prize—the hand of the beautiful Princess Atalanta—to be worth so great a risk.

But in spite of the danger to which they thus exposed themselves, a number of rash young lords and princes came forward to enter themselves as candidates for the foot-race with Atalanta; for her beauty had won their hearts, and her proud reserve only made them all the more eager to win her as a bride.

And when Atalanta came forth now, ready to meet the bold competitors, she no longer hid her face, but met each suitor fearlessly, feeling confident that he would never become her husband, since her quick light feet would soon take her out of his sight; and she would even throw a kiss behind her as she sped past the winning-post at the end of the race.

Though always full of joy that she had won the race and was still a free maiden, she would often plead for the life of the unhappy loser to be spared; but the King was inexorable and would never go back from the stern condition he had imposed, since he only wished the very swiftest runners to race with his daughter, always hoping that one would be found sufficiently fleet footed to outrun her at last.

Thus many noble youths lost their lives; for nearly every day a race took place, and Atalanta always won.

Finally, however, there came a certain young lord named Milanion, who loved Atalanta more deeply than any of the others; but although this suitor had determined to race with the disdainful princess, he did not wish to lose his life by failing to win in the contest. He believed, moreover, that Atalanta secretly returned his love, since she had smiled graciously upon him more than once, and had even allowed him to speak to her; and he felt that if only he could be victorious in the race and marry her, a life of great happiness would be in store for them both.

Therefore he went to Olympus to seek advice from Venus, the goddess of beauty and love; for he realized that Atalanta was more fleet of foot than he, and wisely admitted that he could not hope to be victorious in the race with her without assistance of some kind, or by means of strategy.

When she had listened to what Milanion had to say, Venus placed three bright golden apples in his hand, and said: "Though thou art not so fleet of foot as Atalanta, yet thou mayest win this race if thou wilt but use these golden apples in the way I shall tell thee."

Venus next told the ardent suitor exactly how he was to make use of her gift; and then Milanion went away to the palace and announced his willingness and earnest desire to race with the Princess Atalanta.

"Art thou ready to lay down thy life shouldst thou lose the race?" asked the King; and Milanion replied boldly: "I am ready even to pay that dire penalty if needs be, since I love the fair princess so devotedly that my life is worthless to me if I may not marry her. But I do not expect to be called upon to lay down my life; for it is my intention and earnest desire to win the race and thus gain the priceless award offered."

The King was well pleased with these bold words; and he gladly led Milanion forth to race in the meadows with his daughter, for he liked the looks of the strong, handsome young man and felt hopeful about his running powers.

Now when Atalanta saw who the new-comer was, she was filled with sadness, for she liked him more than any youth she had ever seen before; and it made her sorrowful to think that he must shortly die, since she believed he could not win the race, because, in spite of her real regard for him, she nevertheless meant to run her swiftest, still feeling too shy to wed even with one whom, in her secret heart, she knew she loved.

So, for the first time in her life, Atalanta began to run with a heavy heart; and perhaps that was the reason why she did not run her fastest at the beginning of the race, but carelessly allowed Milanion to get some distance ahead of her, confidently feeling that she would quickly overtake him a little later on.

A great crowd of people had come with the King to watch the race; and when they saw that Milanion was leading, they began to clap their hands and to cheer him, hoping that he would win.

The sound of the cheering made Atalanta quicken her steps, so that she soon began to overtake the youth in front; but just as she came within a few yards of passing him, Milanion let fall one of the bright golden apples given him by the goddess Venus, and it rolled to the feet of the princess, who at once stooped to pick it up, being delighted with the beauty of the dazzling fruit, which flashed so invitingly in the sunshine.

Meanwhile Milanion sped on quickly; and when Atalanta at last looked up from the tempting apple in her hand, he was already a long wav ahead.

Once more the princess ran her swiftest; but just as she drew near to him a second time, Milanion threw down another golden apple, which rolled past Atalanta, who was again so pleased with its beauty that she turned back to pick it up. Never before had she seen such wonderful fruit as the bright golden apples thrown to her by Milanion; and she carefully held one in each hand as she continued the race.

She saw that Milanion was now a long way ahead of her, and though still feeling sure that, even yet she could easily win the race, since she was so much fleeter of foot than he, she hurried on once more. Milanion heard her light steps behind him; and in spite of the fact that he was now not far from the winning-post, he trembled lest she should pass him after all, and thus be the victor.

However, not despairing yet, the youth took out the third golden apple given him by Venus and threw it high up in the air behind him; and as the apple shot up in the bright sunshine, it twinkled like a fiery golden star, so that Atalanta was more dazzled by its beauty than by the charms of either of the others in her hands.

Although she already had two golden apples, the young princess felt that she must have this third one also, and so ran after it at once; but in stooping to pick it up, she dropped the other two, and quite a long time elapsed before she had the three treasures safely within her grasp.

Then, to her amazement and consternation, she saw that Milanion—who was an excellent runner and had never once stopped for a single moment—was nearly out of sight; and though she now ran more swiftly than she had ever done in her life before, her competitor had secured such a good start ahead that she could not possibly overtake him, and thus the panting youth shot past the winning-post first, whilst she was still several yards behind.

Thus, by means of the three golden apples given to him by the goddess Venus, did Milanion win the great race; and his prize was the hand of the beautiful Princess Atalanta, who now willingly became his bride, since a deep love for him had indeed come into her heart.

The fickle goddess Venus, however, did not long bestow her favours upon the happy pair; for it is said that because the lovers shortly afterwards offended her, she transformed them both into lions, and compelled them to draw her chariot when she went abroad.

The Labours of Hercules

The greatest and most famous of all the Greek heroes was Hercules, the strongest man who had ever lived upon the earth, whose mighty deeds are even now looked upon as being symbolic of the tremendous difficulties which beset the path of all seekers after true greatness, which can only be achieved by battling with, and overcoming, the giants and terrible monsters of vice and wickedness.

By means of his mighty strength and power to overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles, Hercules, by his own efforts, actually attained to divinity. He was not at first a god, and, therefore, entitled to immortality by birth, for though his father was Jupiter, the mighty King of Olympus, his mother, Alcmene, was only a mortal maiden of the earth; but he longed from his earliest days to dwell for ever in Olympus, and to be worshipped as the mighty god of strength, who had secured immortality by means of his own great deeds.

Jupiter also greatly desired that his noble son should join the immortals in Olympus; and knowing of the earnest wish of Hercules, he said to him in his early youth: "It is within thine own power to become as one of the gods, my son, but only by going through much pain and tribulation; for the way to greatness and glory is not easy, and he who would attain to the best must give of his best. Thou hast the mightiest strength and greatest powers of endurance of all my children; and if thou wouldst become one of the gods of Olympus, thou must perform many severe tasks, and not be afraid."

"I wish for the best, and will gladly give of my best," cried young Hercules. "Tell me what I must do, oh my father, and I will not be afraid to obey thy will."

Then Jupiter told his son that he must be ready to overcome every evil thing sent against him, and to rid the earth of many terrible monsters that preyed upon mankind, and that, later on, he would have to serve as a slave a certain greedy and powerful king, Eurystheus of Mycenæ, for twelve years, and to perform whatever seemingly-impossible tasks his royal master might choose to set him; but the stout heart of Hercules never quailed for an instant at the prospect before him.

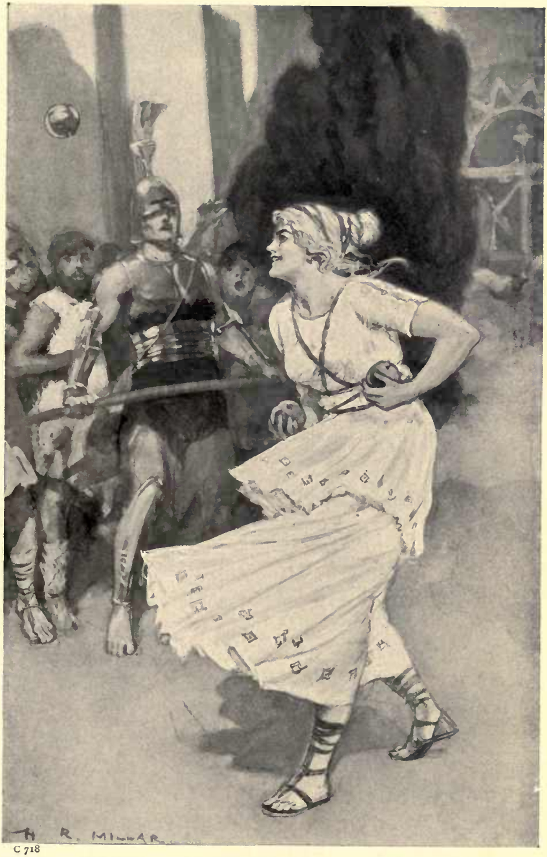
Most of the gods were eager for the brave young Hercules to be their companion in Olympus, for they hoped that his wonderful strength of body and mind would add to their own glory; and therefore they presented him with many useful gifts to aid him in the performance of his tasks. He received from Minerva a helmet and coat of mail; from Apollo a bow and arrows; from Jupiter a shield; from Vulcan a golden cuirass, brazen buskins, and a brazen club; from Mercury a sword; from Neptune a horse.

But although so greatly favoured by the gods, Hercules had one powerful enemy in Olympus, whom he had to contend with throughout his entire life. This was Juno, the goddess-wife of Jupiter, who was so exceedingly jealous of her lord's love for Hercules that she constantly endeavoured to harm the latter, hoping thus to prevent him from attaining to immortality; and instead of assisting him to overcome his difficulties, she compelled the greedy Eurystheus to set the dauntless hero such terrible tasks that no one would have thought it possible for a mortal to perform them. In spite of this opposition from the powerful Queen of Olympus, Hercules, nevertheless, did not fear to undertake any task that was set him; for he felt that his mighty strength, stout heart, and tireless powers of endurance would help him to overcome all, if only he used patience and wisdom.

Even when still but an infant he had been able to prove his strength and courage; for when, one day, two fierce serpents attacked him as he lay in his cradle—having been sent thither to destroy him by the jealous Juno—he caught them both in his little chubby hands and crushed the life out of them.

The more that Juno sought to do harm to the infant hero, however, the more persistently did

Jupiter endeavour to assist his growth towards glory. In order that Hercules might be prepared for the difficulties he would have to contend with later, he was given the usual training of a hero of old, and was taught by the best teachers how to fight fearlessly, to shoot an arrow straight, to drive a chariot, and to excel in all athletic games and warlike pursuits, being also taught the gentle arts of music and singing; and he went to the school of the famous centaur, Chiron, and had as friends and companions the greatest heroes of his time, of whom he himself eventually became the mightiest. He afterwards joined his fellow pupils in some of their future enterprises, being one of the bold heroes who sailed with Jason on the quest of the Golden Fleece. It is said also that when his hero training was over, he retired to a solitary district for a time, where he was put under severe temptations, being visited by the spirits of Pleasure and Virtue, both of whom appeared before him as lovely maidens. The ravishing Pleasure enticed him with alluring smiles to follow in her flowery paths; but Virtue earnestly invited him to choose a life of labour and self-control, promising him the crown of honour and immortality as his reward. After a mighty struggle, Hercules decided to follow in the paths of Virtue; and forthwith he applied himself to the performance of noble deeds for the benefit of mankind.



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ATALANTA STOPS FOR THE THIRD GOLDEN APPLE

The hero first of all slew a terrible lion that had long ravaged his own native district on the outskirts of Thebes; and after this deed, on his entry into Thebes he found the people suffering under an unjust and heavy tax imposed upon them by a neighbouring tyrant king, whom he promptly made war upon and overcame in battle. For these splendid services, the King of Thebes gave him his daughter, the Princess Megara, as his wife, and permitted him to govern his kingdom for several years.

Then Eurystheus, King of Mycenæ, sent an insolent message to the already-renowned hero, bidding him to present himself at Mycenæ to serve the twelve years of slavery appointed by the gods; but Hercules at first resented the tyrant's command, and haughtily declined to serve one whom he regarded as ignoble. This refusal, however, enraged the goddess Juno, who was eager for his time of trial and suffering to commence; and as a punishment she caused him to become mad for a while, in which unnatural state of mind he had the misfortune to kill his own children, whom he dearly loved.

Upon recovering his reason, Hercules was filled with grief and remorse for his terrible deed, and hid himself away from all his friends for some time; but at length he received comfort and forgiveness from the gods, and realizing at last that part of his trial of strength and character must be to serve one whom he despised as his inferior, he now went boldly to Mycenæ, ready to perform every stupendous task and to endure with fortitude whatever suffering might be imposed upon him by gods and men.

Then Eurystheus, encouraged thereto by the still jealous Juno, seeing so mighty a warrior and hero coming thus to him as a slave, and fearful lest he might prove an enemy in years to come, commanded him to perform certain arduous tasks, requiring such superhuman powers to achieve that they have since become known as the Labours of Hercules.

The story of these famous labours is as follows:—

(1) Hercules was first of all commanded to kill the Nemean lion, a terribly fierce and huge beast which dwelt in the wild woods of Nemea, and which roamed forth at dusk to devour the shepherds and other country folk of the district.

This lion was believed to have dropped out of the moon, and therefore could not be harmed by any weapon made on earth. Hercules, having received weapons from the gods, might have used these with effect; but when he came face to face with the ramping lion, he found it necessary to grapple with it at once, and, flinging away his sword and club, he strangled the king of beasts with his own powerful hands. When he had thus slain the fierce lion by means of his own mighty strength, he stripped off its fine skin, which he afterwards wore as his chief garment. He then carried the huge carcass of the beast back to Mycenæ; and King Eurystheus was so amazed at the sight of it, and at the wonderful strength and courage of Hercules, that he commanded him never to enter the gates of the city when he returned from his adventures, but to await his further orders without the walls. The craven King even made himself a huge brazen vessel into which he retired whenever Hercules returned.

(2) *The Fight with the Lernean Hydra.* This monster was a frightful dragon which had nine heads; and it dwelt in the swamps bordering the Lake of Lerna, in a dismal and lonely district known as the Field of Argos. Hercules took his friend Iolaus with him on this adventure; but when they arrived at the Lake of Lerna, and the horrible hydra came crawling out of the slimy black swamp where it lived, his companion's courage vanished, and he ran away at once to hide behind a bush, so that the hero was left alone in his hour of need.

The scaly body of the dragon was as huge as the largest haystack ever seen; and each of its nine fearful heads had a gaping mouth full of pointed teeth, and a sinuous neck as long as the longest serpent—and the sight of it made even brave Hercules tremble. But the noble son of great Jupiter would not shrink from the task that had been set him; and when the first long snaky neck of the hydra stretched out its fierce head to snap at him with its fearful jaws, he boldly attacked it and struck it off with one mighty stroke of his brazen club.

Then, to his horror and amazement, two more heads sprang out upon the severed neck of the one he had just struck off; and the same thing happened every time he aimed a blow. For each head of the hydra he struck off two more sprang out to take its place; and Hercules began to lose heart, as he felt that his great strength would be of no avail in this impossible task, with so many frightful heads hissing, snarling, and bellowing around him.

Then, in his agony, he called upon Minerva, the goddess of wisdom, who caused a sudden bright idea to come into his mind; and he called out to his concealed friend to come forth and build up a fire of wood and make his sword red hot in the flames, promising to protect him from the monster. Iolaus, encouraged once more, quickly came forth to do his bidding, whilst the hero kept the monster at bay; and when the sword had been made red hot, Hercules struck off another of the hydra's heads and passed the glowing steel over the wound, thus preventing any more new heads from springing forth. In this manner he was able to strike off all the heads of the hydra, one by one, until at last the terrible monster

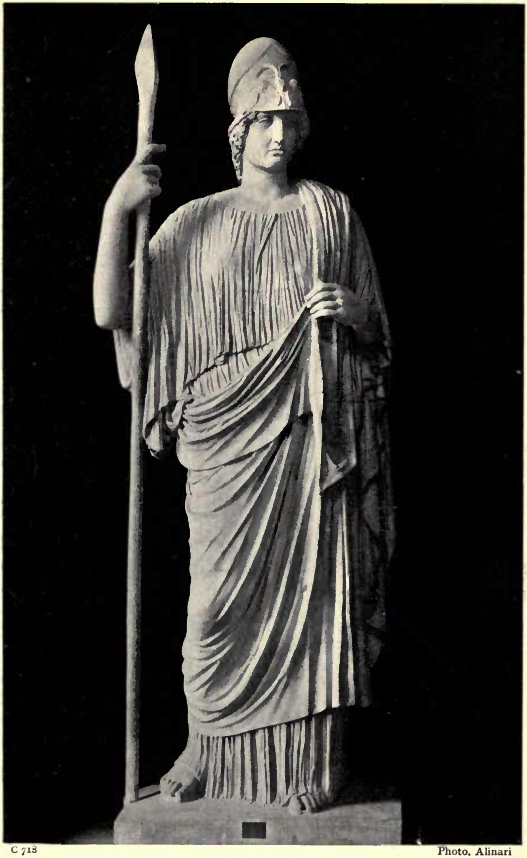

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Photo. Alinari

MINERVA

From the statue in the Capitoline Museum, Rome

rolled over, dead; and after having dipped all the arrows in his quiver into the poisonous gall of the dragon, to render fatal the wounds they should afterwards inflict, Hercules returned victorious to his taskmaster, who now commanded him to perform a third labour.

(3) *Capture of the Arcadian Stag.* He was to bring alive into the presence of Eurystheus the fleet-footed stag of Diana, the goddess of hunting, a stag famous for its golden antlers, its brazen feet, and its incredible swiftness, and which no mortal had ever yet been known to draw nigh unto. The animal dwelt in the district of Œnoe; and Hercules spent a whole year in its pursuit. But though the hero grew weary many times, he would not give up his quest; and at last, by slightly wounding it, he was able to capture the stag, and brought it alive to the palace of Eurystheus.

(4) *Capture of the Erymanthian Boar.* This was a wild beast so big and fierce that no one had ever dared to hunt it before; and Hercules not only chased the boar through deep snow, and at last caught it in a net, but held it tightly bound in his own iron grasp, and brought it thus, alive, to show to his royal master, who was so terrified at the sight of it that he hid himself in his brazen vessel for several days in fear and trembling, and refused to venture out until the hero had slain his prize.

(5) *Cleansing the Augean Stables.* Augeas,

King of Elis, had a herd of three thousand oxen, the stalls of which had not been cleansed for thirty years; and Hercules was now commanded to cleanse them in one day. This stupendous task he succeeded in performing by altering the courses of the Rivers Alpheus and Peneus, so that their waters rushed through the Augean stables and washed them clean in one day.

(6) *Destruction of the Stymphalian Birds.* There were a flock of fierce vultures, dwelling near Lake Stymphalus, which ate human flesh, and employed their own brazen feathers as arrows which they could shoot down upon their intended victims; and no one had yet succeeded in slaying any of them. When Hercules was bidden to destroy these fearful birds, he took out his bow and quiver, and shot at his foes with his poisoned arrows, which, by means of his great strength and skill, he was able to shoot with such wonderful swiftness that he killed most of the flock before the creatures could swoop down upon him.

(7) *The Capture of the Cretan Bull.* A large and beautiful bull had long ravaged the island of Crete, being a terror to the people, and Hercules was commanded to capture and tame the creature; and the hero not only performed the task, but carried the great bull away on his shoulders.

(8) *Capture of the Mares of Diomedes.* The wicked tyrant King Diomedes of Thrace kept

a herd of man-eating mares; and Hercules was ordered to bring these unnatural steeds to Eurystheus and to destroy their wicked owner. The hero first flung the tyrant King into the midst of the herd to be devoured by them—this having been the sad fate to which he had himself condemned many unhappy strangers to his land—and then with the aid of a few of his friends, he captured the fierce mares and led them to Eurystheus, who sent them to Mount Olympus, where they were devoured by other wild beasts.

(9) *Seizure of the Girdle of the Queen of the Amazons.* The Amazons were a race of fierce, warlike women, who lived near the river Thermodon; and Hercules was bidden to make war upon their queen, Hippolyta, whom he defeated and from whom he succeeded in taking the famous jewelled girdle she wore, which was the finest in the world.

(10) *The Capture of the Oxen of Geryon.* Geryon, King of Gades, was a terrible, three-bodied monster who kept a flock of oxen which he fed upon human flesh; and by means of his mighty strength, Hercules slew the monster and brought away the flocks, as he had been commanded to do.

(11) *Fetching the Golden Apples of the Hesperides.* The Hesperides were three fair nymphs who dwelt in a beautiful garden at the foot of Mount Atlas, in North-west Africa, where they

were the guardians of a wonderful tree which bore golden apples; and to assist them in their charge, a terrible fiery dragon lay coiled at the foot of the tree. Hercules was bidden to gather the golden fruit of this magic tree and bring the spoils to Eurystheus; but as he was given no information as to the whereabouts of the Garden of the Hesperides, he spent a long time upon this labour. As he rested one evening in a quiet valley, however, he beheld a number of pretty dryads and other nymphs sporting at a little distance; and making friends with these dainty beings, he learned from them that the only person who could tell him of the whereabouts of the Hesperides' abode was Nereus, one of the chief marine divinities who, because he dwelt at the bottom of the ocean, was known as the Wise Old Man of the Sea. Before he could hope to secure any information from Nereus, however, Hercules was told that he would have to bind him fast with thongs, since, otherwise, he would reveal nothing; and the hero continued his journey with renewed hope, ready for the struggle in store for him. At length he came to a cave on the seashore, where he found the Old Man of the Sea asleep on the sands, having been lulled into a deep slumber by the sweet singing of the pretty mermaids who danced in the shallow waves or sat upon the rocks combing out their long hair.

Quickly Hercules sprang upon Nereus and bound him with the thongs he had brought; and immediately the Old Man of the Sea awakened and began to practise the magical gifts he possessed, by changing himself first into one wild beast and then into another, hoping thus to terrify his captor into flight. But Hercules remained undaunted, and clung fast to his captive, no matter what alarming shape he assumed; and at length Nereus owned himself conquered and gave the hero the information he demanded.

Then Hercules set free the Old Man of the Sea; and by following the directions given him by the latter, he at length came to Mount Atlas and entered the Garden of the Hesperides. No sooner did he approach the tree with the golden apples than the monster dragon rushed out upon him breathing forth fiery flames and gnashing its terrible teeth; but after a mighty struggle, Hercules slew the monster and gathered the golden apples, which he took to his royal master. Eurystheus, however, returned the fruit to his mighty slave, and Hercules gave the golden apples to the goddess Minerva, who afterwards replaced them upon the tree in the Garden of the Hesperides.

(12) *Fetching Cerberus from the Under-world.* For his twelfth labour, Hercules was commanded to bring the three-headed dog Cerberus from the under-world. This was the most difficult task of all; for the way to the Land of Shades

was full of dangers, and the fierce Cerberus, the guardian of the palace gates of the King of the Under-world, was the most terrifying and the strongest beast ever known. Pluto, however, was so astonished at the dauntless courage of Hercules in making the journey to his gloomy abode that he not only permitted him to release two of his hero friends who were captives in the under-world—Theseus and Ascalaphus—but gave him leave also to take away Cerberus for a short time, on condition that he used no weapons but only force in binding him, and that he brought him back safely after showing him to the King of Mycenæ. Hercules cheerfully agreed to the conditions imposed upon him; and after a terrible struggle with the three-headed dog, he succeeded in binding him. Then he took the fearful beast away from the Land of Shades and showed him to Eurystheus, who, full of terror, bade him take the fierce dog back again at once.

With the return of Cerberus to the underworld, Hercules had now completed his twelve mighty labours, and his service with Eurystheus thus came to an end.

In addition to these famous tasks, Hercules also performed many other wonderful deeds of strength and met with strange adventures in many distant lands, always overcoming all the difficulties he encountered with fearless courage and endurance, as became a mighty man of valour. Once or twice, however, he yielded to temptations, and acted unworthily; and for a short time he fell a victim to the wiles of Omphale, Queen of Lydia, who enticed him to forget the constant duties of a hero, and instead to waste his hours in idleness and soft pleasures. Happily, however, his better nature triumphed in the end, and he returned to his splendid exploits with renewed zest.

Hercules was married to a princess of Calydon, named Deianira, whom he greatly loved, but by whose fault his marvellous career came to an end; for, during one of his absences from home, she sent him a tunic which she believed to possess the magic power of preserving his love to her for ever, but which, in reality, was soaked with a deadly poison.

When Hercules received this tunic, he was about to offer up a sacrifice of thanksgiving to Jupiter in celebration of one of his victories; but immediately he donned the fatal garment he became so convulsed with agony that he flung himself upon the burning pyre and perished in the flames.

Because of the mighty deeds he had done in ridding the earth of so many monsters and tyrants, and because he had faithfully fought with evil and conquered, Hercules, the mightiest of all the heroes of ancient times, had gained for himself immortality; and he was carried away in great glory amidst thunder and lightning, to dwell amongst the gods in Olympus for ever.

The Story of Alcestis

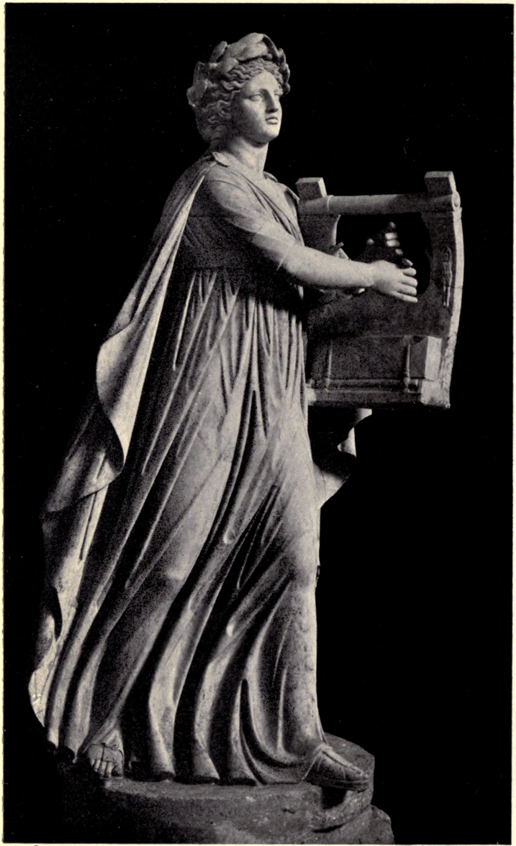
It was a sad day for the people of Thessaly when they heard that their good King, Admetus, was dying; and all the land was filled with woe.

The noble Admetus had ruled his people wisely and well, and was so dearly beloved by them that they could not bear to think that he should be taken away from them whilst still young; and many were the prayers that went up to the gods that the good King might be spared to them for many more years to come.

The saddest heart of all was that of the wife of Admetus, the beautiful Queen Alcestis; and she could not restrain her tears when she knew that her beloved one must soon leave her for the Land of the Shades.

And the dying King himself, though too brave and noble to fear what might be in store for him in the gloomy under-world where Pluto reigned, yet could not keep back his own tears when he saw the grief of his fair wife, and knew that he must soon be parted from her.

It happened that the glorious sun-god, Apollo, was the friend of Admetus, who had been kind to



C 718 Photo. Anderson

APOLLO

From the statue in the Vatican Museum, Rome

him and had treated him courteously when he had been sent forth from Olympus to dwell upon earth for a certain time because he had offended the gods by slaying one of the Cyclops. He had kept watch over the flocks of Admetus during this time of banishment; and the pair had become good friends and had learned to love one another well.

It was Apollo who had helped Admetus to win the Princess Alcestis, by sending him to woo her and to carry her away from her home in a car drawn by a wild boar and a lion, in accordance with the conditions imposed by her father, that she might know her lover to be so strong and fearless that he could even make the wild beasts obey him; and so there was always a glad welcome for the god of music and the arts in the land of Thessaly.

But when it chanced that Apollo came into the royal palace on the day when the sad news had become known that the beloved King was soon to die, he found gloom on every side; and the weeping Queen begged for his assistance in this trouble.

"Alas! I cannot help in this matter, greatly though I wish it," replied Apollo sadly. "The Fates—those three most mighty sisters, who measure the span of human lives, and to whom all men must bow—have said that Admetus must die now; and since they have asked for a life, they must be given a life. Yet, because of the love I bear to Admetus, have I visited the Gray Sisters, and have drawn from them one hope of saving this beloved life they ask—but so poor a hope is it that it is but wasting time to speak of it."

"Nay, nay, good Apollo, that cannot be!" cried Alcestis eagerly. "I prithee, tell me of this hope. What do the mighty Fates ask?"

"They say," said Apollo, "that if another life be offered to them in the place of that of Admetus, they will accept it and will permit the beloved King to live on still for many years. Is not this a poor hope? Surely no mortal is likely to take up such an offer and be willing to leave this sunny world of brightness for the gloomy Land of Shades, from whence none may return?"

"Say not so; for even that will I do with gladness!" cried Alcestis, with joy ringing in her voice once more. "How can I show my love better than by dying for him I love? Oh, Admetus, my beloved king, thou shalt yet live for many years longer to rule over thy people; for I will go to the Land of Shades in thy stead."

It was in vain that the sick King refused to allow his Queen to die in his place, declaring nobly that he could not retain his own life at the price of hers, for Alcestis only wept the more at his refusal; and Apollo now said: "Thou must take the gift that is offered thee, oh King; for the Fates have even now heard that thy Queen will give her life for thine, and they will accept her sacrifice and are satisfied."

And thus Admetus had to bow to the will of the gods and his fair Queen, and live on for the well-being of his people; and the beautiful Alcestis sank willingly and gently into the sleep of death, and passed away into the Land of Shades.

But the King, though restored to health once more, was so overwhelmed with grief at the loss of his beloved wife that no one could comfort him; and the royal palace was still full of gloom, and the lords and ladies of the court could not speak for the sadness of their hearts.

It chanced that Hercules, the famous strong man of the ancient Greeks—of whose wonderful deeds of strength many strange tales are told—was also a friend of Admetus, and happened to come to the palace at that time; and, not knowing of the death of Alcestis, he called for the King and asked for a feast and merry pastimes.

Admetus, like all truly noble men, was full of kindness; and seeing that Hercules was tired and hungry, he unselfishly put aside his own grief for the time being and sat down to feast with his friend, calling for music and mirth, and performing all the offices of true hospitality as was his usual custom; and it was not until the hero-guest had retired to rest that he learned from the servants that the fair Queen was dead and that he had come to a house of mourning.

Hercules was then so overcome with distress that he should have unwittingly been the cause of feasting and merriment at such a sorrowful time, that he could not rest at all, but tried instead to think out some plan of bringing comfort to Admetus; and, when all was quiet, he crept softly out of the palace in the dead of night, and was soon lost in the darkness.

Without the least fear—for he was the strongest and bravest man that had ever been known—he journeyed swiftly to the Land of Shades, where he boldly commanded Pluto, the dark King of the Under-world, to restore Alcestis to her sorrowing husband. He had a great struggle with the King of the Shades; but he won by his boldness and mighty strength, and at last brought forth Alcestis to the upper world once more, alive and well.

Then he took her back to the palace of Admetus, and gave her into the arms of the amazed King, saying: "Because thou receivedst me with kindness and joy and showed hospitality to me when thine own heart was full of sadness, I have brought back to thee thy beloved Alcestis, who will quickly fill thee with real joy once more."

Thus was Alcestis restored to her loving husband; and the good King and his fair Queen lived happily together for many more years.

The Story of Cupid and Psyche

Who has not heard of Cupid, the mischievous God of Love, the son and constant companion of Venus, the Goddess of Beauty? You must often have seen him pictured with his fair mother—a merry little boy with chubby face, golden wings, with no other covering upon his rosy body save a golden quiver full of arrows, and carrying a bow, with which he was ever ready to shoot forth his arrows of love into the hearts of gods and mortals alike.

It is not known whether the father of Cupid was Jupiter, Mars, or Mercury; but he quickly proved himself to be more powerful than these great gods, since even they could not resist the power of love when "Cupid's darts" entered their hearts.

Young Cupid was full of mischief, and delighted to upset the careful plans of gods and kings by means of his well-aimed arrows; and it was a joy to him to cause the strangest people to fall in love with one another.

Because the victims of his fiery darts could never see the faults in each other's characters, the ancients declared that Cupid was either blind, or else went about his business with his eyes bandaged; and often their artists represented him as blindfolded. Others, however, represented him as a fully-armed conqueror, since Love carries all before him and is the subduer of the universe.

In the very earliest representations of Cupid he was shown as a perfect model of beautiful youth; and a very charming story is told of his own love for the dainty Psyche.

A certain king had three daughters, the two elder of whom were only of moderate beauty; but the youngest, Psyche, was as lovely as a goddess, as airy-fairy as a sprite, as light and graceful as a butterfly, and, withal, as pure and fresh as a newly-opened rosebud.

So lovely was Psyche, indeed, that she was often mistaken for Venus, and even adored by certain mortals as that fair divinity; and this so offended the goddess of beauty—who was ever jealous of her charms—that she commanded her son Cupid to visit the audacious princess who dared to rival herself in beauty, and, by shooting one of his unerring darts into her heart, to inspire her with love for some monster, or other unworthy object.

Away flew the golden-winged young Cupid, ever ready to obey such commands from his fair mother, and rejoicing at his own magic power as he eagerly fitted the fatal arrow to his bow, but when he arrived at his destination and beheld Psyche, the exquisite mortal maid whom he had come to wound, her wonderful beauty so entranced him that he fell in love with her himself on the spot. He therefore returned the fatal arrow to its sheath, and withdrew to make plans for winning this lovely maid for himself.

Meanwhile the King desired to see his beautiful daughter wedded; but on learning from an oracle that she was destined to become the bride of a destructive monster, he commanded that she should be conveyed to a mountain top, and left there alone upon an altar of rock to await her fate.

But as the unhappy Psyche lay upon the mountain top alone, Zephyrus, the west wind, gently transported her to a secret bower of delight; and here she was visited every night, as soon as darkness set in, by Cupid, whose love she quickly returned, even though he was unseen by her and unknown.

For the rescued Psyche a short time of perfect happiness now followed, which might have long continued had not the fair princess herself broken the spell. During the daytime she roamed about in a wonderful garden of roses, decking herself with the gay, sweet-scented blossoms, and flitting hither and thither after the myriads of gorgeous-hued butterflies that danced in the glowing sunshine—herself as light and dainty as any insect there; and one day as she stood weaving a wreath of rosebuds upon the edge of this fair paradise of flowers, her two sisters happened to pass by, to whom she related the story of her rescue from the cold altar upon the mountain top, and of the glorious unknown lover who visited her every night after darkness fell and whom she loved so tenderly.

The two elder princesses, always envious of their younger sister's exquisite beauty, were now jealous of the happiness which had fallen to her lot; and, therefore, anxious to bring her dream of bliss to an end, they endeavoured to sow distrust in her mind by declaring that the lover whose caresses she delighted in, so far from being the handsome youth she so fondly imagined, was probably the horrible monster for whom she had been destined and from whom she would flee in disgust could she but behold him.

As doubt of her beloved one thus entered the heart of Psyche, the first cloud appeared upon the horizon of her happiness; and that evening she determined to behold for herself the real features of her mysterious visitor. In the dead of night, therefore, when Cupid had fallen asleep, she arose from her bed of roses, and lighting a lamp, bent over the couch of her lover, in fear and trembling lest some hideous shape should appear before her eyes; and her surprise and relief were so great as she beheld a youth of surpassing beauty that, in the excitement caused by her admiration and delight, she let fall a drop of hot oil from the lamp upon the rosy shoulder of Cupid, so that he instantly awakened.

Deeply wounded that his beloved one should thus, even for a moment, have entertained mistrust of him, Cupid fled away from her presence at once; and Psyche, full of grief and despair at this dire result of her foolish doubts, wandered forth in every direction seeking her lost lover. After having vainly endeavoured to throw herself into a river—being prevented by miraculous means from thus destroying herself—she struggled on from temple to temple, hoping to hear news of the radiant being she adored, and for whose loss she was inconsolable.

At length she came to the temple of Venus; and the jealous queen of beauty, recognizing her rival in the downcast wanderer, took her in, determined to punish her for presuming to match a goddess in fair looks.

A time of severe trial had now to be endured by the unhappy Psyche; for Venus kept her in close attendance upon her whims, treated her harshly as a slave and laid upon her the hardest and most trying of tasks, which the drooping maiden could never have lived through had she not here discovered her lost lover, Cupid. For the gentle god of love had already forgotten his brief anger for her doubt of him; and since he still tenderly loved her, he revealed himself and secretly assisted her in all her labours, and comforted her in every trouble.

Even when, in the performance of her last dangerous task, at the command of Venus, she descended into the Land of Shades and brought away a box of cosmetics used by Queen Proserpina, which Venus desired to possess in order to enhance her own beauty, her eager lover saved her from terrible dangers; and when Psyche, having succeeded in the adventure and been bidden by her task-mistress to open the casket, fell lifeless to the ground, overcome by the deadly fumes that issued forth from it, she was quickly restored to life again by Cupid, at the touch of whose magic arrow her numbed senses awakened to new life.

The heart of Venus was quite melted by this last proof of a lover's devotion; and the gentle submission of Psyche to the harsh treatment meted out to her, having conquered her jealousy entirely, the beautiful goddess no longer offered opposition to her adored son's wooing, but became reconciled to the lovely pair.

At the command of Jupiter, Psyche was made immortal; and she was united to her beloved Cupid with great rejoicings, all the gods attending her marriage. The envious sisters, however, did not rejoice; and they were so jealous of the final happiness of fair Psyche that, in their rage and disappointment, they flung themselves over a precipice.

This beautiful story is probably intended to illustrate the triumph of love over hatred and jealousy, and to prove that true happiness can only be secured at the cost of much pain and suffering. The name Psyche denotes the soul; and in works of art Psyche is always represented as a dainty maiden of ethereal loveliness and grace, with the wings of a butterfly.

Pyramus and Thisbe

In ancient Babylon there dwelt a beautiful maiden named Thisbe, who loved, and was beloved by, Pyramus, a gentle youth who lived in the house adjoining her own home; but though these fair lovers were equal in beauty, age, social position, and fortune, their course of true love was doomed from the first to run awry, because of an unhappy blood feud which had existed between the two families for many ages past.

Yet, as the Fates would have it, Pyramus and Thisbe had begun to love each other from their cradles, when, on being lifted up in their nurses' arms one day, they had first exchanged smiles through the opened casements of opposite windows; and since their homes adjoined, their love arose from their close proximity, grew greater by their mutual play, and was perfected by their singular beauty of body and mind.

This early-implanted love increased with their years, so that when they had at length grown out of childhood and were of a marriageable age—Pyramus a handsome, lusty youth, and Thisbe a fair, tender maiden—they entreated their parents to give consent to their speedy union; but, to their great sorrow, this request was sternly refused. The parents would not renounce their ancient blood feud, and were filled with anger that their children should even dare to think of being united; and in order that the audacious lovers should not have the opportunity of attempting to wed against their parents' will, they were forbidden to speak together or even to behold one another.

And now what could the love-sick Pyramus do? And how was the weeping Thisbe to bear separation from her beloved one? Their case was sad and desperate—yet did Love find out a way. There was a partition wall between the two houses, in which wall there happened to be a small chink that had never been noticed by any of the servants throughout the years that had gone by, so that it was almost hidden with dust and cobwebs; and one day as the lovers passed drearily up and down on either side of the wall, they discovered this narrow chink, and, carefully removing the cobwebs, found, to their joy, that they could hold communication with one another by means of it.

Every day thereafter Pyramus and Thisbe met at the chink in the wall and held sweet converse together, without arousing any suspicions in the minds of their harsh parents; and with this small comfort they had fain to be content for a time, since it helped them to bear their cruel separation somewhat better. Their loving words and sorrowful sighs went through the friendly chink; but their sweet kisses could not pass through, which, when they parted each day, they imprinted passionately on each side of the wall.

But the fatal rapturous love thus preserved and cherished in their hearts by means of this tiny breach in the wall could not long be content to be confined within such narrow limits; and at last the lovers resolved to act more boldly, and, in defiance of their parents' wishes and commands, to enjoy that liberty abroad which was denied them at home. They agreed to make their escape next evening at twilight into a neighbouring lonely wood, and to meet beneath the shade of a certain large mulberry tree which grew beside a fountain, a spot well known to both the plotters.

Next evening, therefore, as twilight was deepening, Thisbe managed to elude the watchful vigilance of her attendants and escaped from the house with a beating heart; and once safely without the gates of her prison-home, she fled with the swiftness of a deer to the woods; for Love lent her wings, since Cupid's fatal arrow lay deeply embedded in her heart.

In breathless haste the maiden came first to the appointed meeting-place beneath the mulberry tree; and here she quickly found herself in danger, for a lioness suddenly bounded forth, fresh from the rending of an ox, to drink at the fountain. Affrighted, the beautiful Thisbe fled away from this unexpected peril; and in her haste she dropped the filmy gauze veil in which she had enveloped herself to avoid possible recognition.

When the lioness returned from quenching her thirst at the fountain, she found this veil upon the ground, and savagely rent it in pieces with her blood-stained jaws; then, letting it fall again, she bounded away to her own distant lair.

A few moments later Pyramus arrived breathless upon the scene, impatiently looking around with a lover's eagerness for the object of his affection; and presently beholding the imprints of a wild beast's feet in the dew-soaked ground, he was filled with alarm, which increased to intense horror as, suddenly spying Thisbe's torn and blood-besprinkled veil, he seized it in a trembling grasp and gazed upon it with terrified eyes.

His already-excited imagination at once causing him to jump hastily to the conclusion that his beloved Thisbe had been carried off and devoured by some savage wild beast, Pyramus grew distracted as he hastened to the mulberry tree, only to find that no fair Thisbe waited beneath its friendly shade; and full of despair, and caring no longer to live since the darling of his heart was dead, as he now fully believed, he flung himself upon his drawn sword, and fell dead upon the ground.

Meanwhile the gentle Thisbe had recovered somewhat from her fright, and, timidly creeping back to the appointed place on tiptoe, she approached the mulberry tree once more; but seeing a man writhing upon the ground in a death agony, she ran back again in fresh alarm. Then turning and, to her horror, recognizing in the dying man the features of her beloved Pyramus, she rushed back in frantic haste, and clasped the gasping youth in a passionate embrace, mingling her tears with his blood, imploring him to live yet for her sake and to answer when his Thisbe called to him, being almost distracted with grief as she lamented the misfortune that robbed her of her lover. But the unhappy Pyramus was already beyond entreaty; and with a last tender look of love, he expired in the arms of Thisbe, who, beside herself with despair, tore her hair and beat her breast in a paroxysm of grief, unable to account for the calamity that had befallen her.

Presently, however, she beheld her own blood-stained veil in the cold hand of Pyramus; and then understanding at last the reason for his death, and no longer desiring to live on without him, she calmly withdrew the sword from the body of her lover and plunged it deeply into her own breast. As she dropped back, dying, she fell, accidentally, upon the bosom of the dead youth; and by a mighty effort, she gave him one last soft lover's kiss, and then expired beside him.

Thus perished the fair unfortunate lovers, Pyramus and Thisbe; and it is said that the mulberry tree, being warmed with the blood of the slain youth and maiden, became sensible of their misfortunes and mourned for their untimely deaths. Its berries, which, before, were white, became first red with grief for the death of the gentle Pyramus; and then, when lovely Thisbe also died, the berries became black and dark, as if they had put on mourning for loss of the fair maiden of Babylon.

Midas and the Magic Gold

When Midas, King of Phrygia, was but a babe in the cradle, a soothsayer came to the palace of his father, King Gordius, and prophesied that the infant prince would possess untold wealth when he had reached to manhood, because, one day, a swarm of ants had been seen dropping grains of corn into the open mouth of the child. This latter incident was regarded as a sure sign that the royal child was born to be rich; and therefore no one was surprised when, some years later, on succeeding to the throne of Phrygia, Midas quickly became the richest king in the whole world. So rich was he that he had great store-rooms full of gold and jewels; and he was never tired of counting out his wealth and of glorying in the mighty power that it would give him.

So eager was King Midas to amass a great hoard of gold that he might have become a wretched miser had there not been another treasure in the world that he valued even more than riches—and this saving grace was the tender love he bore to his little daughter. So devotedly did King Midas love his daughter that he longed above all other things to make her happy; and since he believed that if he made her the richest princess in the world, she could not fail to be happy, he never relaxed his efforts to gather together an enormous hoard of gold for her later use, thus foolishly blinding himself to the fact that it was the love he bestowed upon his child that brought her happiness, not the riches he lavished upon her, and that many of the happiest and most contented people in the world were quite poor.

However, King Midas spent nearly all his time in hoarding up wealth for his pretty little daughter; and it was one of his greatest delights to gaze upon his bulging bags and large caskets of gold and dazzling jewels, and to think of the fine fortune he was gathering together. Then one day there came an unexpected interruption to the usual doings of the miser king; and by means of a strange adventure Midas was taught a very wise lesson.

Bacchus, the god of wine and the inventor of the occupations of vine-growing, tilling the earth, and many other useful arts, was specially favourably disposed to the people of Phrygia; and one time when he was travelling through that country, his tutor and companion, Silenus, a merry old satyr, became lost, and eventually wandered to the court of King Midas, from whom he craved assistance and hospitality.

Midas at once left off counting out his gold and jewels and received old Silenus very kindly, entertaining him with a splendid feast; and then, after his guest had sufficiently rested himself, he set forth with the gay satyr and helped him to find his august master. After considerable trouble, the pair at length came across the god Bacchus in the midst of a splendid vineyard which he had helped the Phrygians to plant; and the merry god of wine was so pleased and grateful for the kindness shown to his beloved old tutor by Midas that he desired the latter to name a reward for himself, promising to grant any wish he might give utterance to.

Midas, though he had willingly offered hospitality to the wandering stranger without thinking of reward, now did not hesitate to accept one when offered to him; and, as usual, unable to resist the dictates of his ruling passion, he desired the god of wine to grant that everything he touched might be changed to gold.

"Thou hast not chosen wisely, oh Midas," said Bacchus, when he heard this audacious request. "Boundless wealth does not of necessity bring happiness, and the power of turning everything thou touchest into gold may prove inconvenient. Yet I will not go back upon my word. Therefore, return to thy palace, and when the morrow dawns, thou wilt find that thy request has been granted, and the desire of thy life fulfilled. But do not blame me if thou art not satisfied."

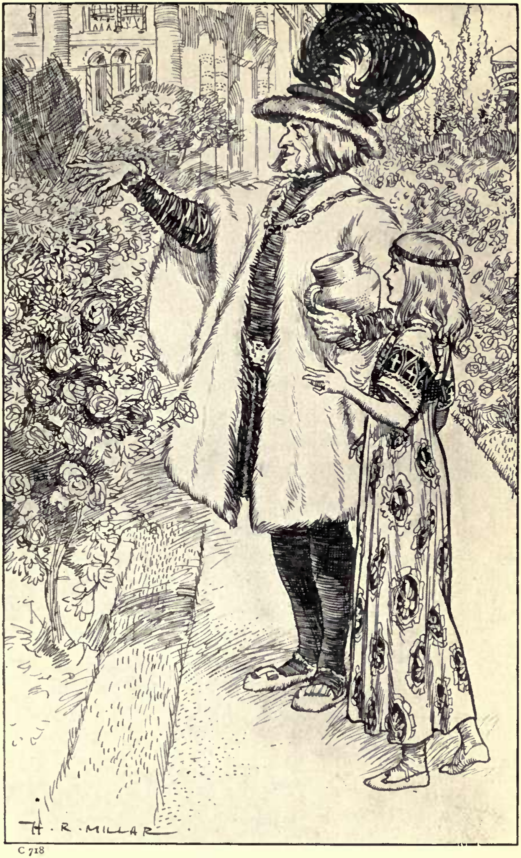
Then King Midas returned to his palace, full of delight at the thought of the wonderful gift that had been promised to him; and so excited was he about the matter that he scarcely enjoyed a wink of sleep all night. When the rosy dawn at length appeared, he sprang up eagerly from his luxurious couch; and, to his amazement and joy, he found that everything he touched was instantly changed to gold. The silken threads of his royal garments became transformed to woven webs of dazzling gold; and in spite of the wearisome heaviness of his new and valuable attire, Midas danced for joy. And as he danced, the floor of his bedchamber became a block of solid gold; and when he drew back the curtains from the doorway, stiff draperies of gold clashed behind him.

Overjoyed at the prospect of unlimited wealth before him, the excited King ran out into the palace garden, leaving golden footprints wherever he trod; and unmindful of the exquisite colouring and sweet perfume of the roses and other lovely flowers growing there, he enthusiastically transformed them all, together with the leafy trees at various points, into solid carved models of the precious yellow metal, the dazzling glare of which in the brilliant sunshine made his head ache and nearly blinded him. Instead of the cool greenery which before had been such a pleasant relief from the hot rays of the sun, the stiff trees of gold reflected a stifling glow on all around.

Midas, however, was cheerfully willing to endure this slight inconvenience for the sake of the marvellous wealth he now possessed in his palace garden; but his rejoicing received a sudden check when his little daughter presently appeared before him weeping bitterly because there were no pretty-coloured, sweet-smelling roses for her to pluck.

Midas now felt for the first time that his wonderful golden gift might not turn out to be the unmixed blessing he had at first been so ready to imagine; but comforting his weeping child as best he could, the pair of them went indoors to partake of their morning meal.

And now another disillusionment awaited the



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KING MIDAS SPRINKLES THE GOLDEN PLANTS WITH THE MAGIC WATER

King; for as he eagerly helped himself to the dainty food temptingly displayed before him, being hungry after his early morning labours, he was dismayed to find that as soon as the food touched his mouth, it hardened into gold, and since he could not eat solid lumps of yellow gold, however precious, he realized that the gift granted so readily at his own foolish request was certainly a most uncomfortable and undesirable one after all, since it was likely to bring him to starvation.

How he now envied his child as she enjoyed the fruit and milk served out to her; and at that moment he would gladly have changed places with the humblest peasant in his land, who could at least eat his meagre crust with relish.

Seeing how distressed her father looked, the little princess ran up to him with loving concern and flung her arms around his neck; and King Midas, thankful for her sweet sympathy, returned her caresses gladly, and folded her in a tender embrace. Even as he did so, he felt the little form stiffen and grow rigid in his grasp, and, filled with horror, he gazed upon her, to behold an inanimate golden statue in his arms.

In despairing accents Midas frantically endeavoured to restore his beloved child to life once more; but finding all his efforts in vain, the distracted King ran in haste to the vineyard where Bacchus was again instructing the Phrygian husbandmen in the new art of vine-growing, and besought the god to take back his golden gift, since it had proved but a snare and woeful curse to him, so that he had even lost the dearest treasure of his heart—his beloved child—and starvation also was before him.

Bacchus now saw that Midas had learnt the lesson he had desired to teach him — that riches alone cannot bring true happiness; and since he had thus become a wiser man, the merry god had pity upon him, and resolved to remove the burden he had laid upon him at his own request. He therefore ordered the King to bathe in the river Pactolus, which flowed through his palace gardens, when the golden gift would depart from him; and also, if he cared to sprinkle some of the same water of the stream upon the various objects he had converted into gold, the magic spell would thus be removed from them, and they would appear in their natural colours and substances once more.

Humbly thanking the kindly god for his gracious assistance, Midas hastened to the shores of the river Pactolus, and plunging into the sparkling waters, was soon relieved to find that the spell was broken and that his touch no longer had the power of transforming objects into gold. But the golden gift of Bacchus was not lost, although it had departed from Midas; for it now fell harmlessly upon the river Pactolus, in the sandy bed of which glittering grains of gold were to be found ever afterwards.

But the gold in the river no longer had power to interest or tempt King Midas, who had now learnt the meaning of true riches; and hastily filling a vessel with water from the stream, he hastened into the palace and sprinkled the still-golden form of his child with it. To his joy, the dull-yellow metal instantly vanished, and the pretty pink and white colouring came back into the face of the little princess, her wondering blue eyes opened wide once more, her silky hair fluttered in the breeze, and her soft flesh became warm and alive.

Never in his whole life had Midas felt so happy as at that moment when his beloved daughter ran laughing into his arms and prattled merrily to him as of yore; and, taking her by the hand, he went round the palace garden with her, and together they sprinkled the magic water upon all the stiff golden flowers and trees that dazzled their eyes. In a short time gaily-coloured roses and sweet-scented blossoms of all kinds nodded in the soft breezes, and cool green leafy trees threw a grateful shade here and there; and King Midas breathed a deep sigh of relief and thankfulness that he had at last learnt the wonderful lesson that the amassing of riches does not bring the greatest happiness, but that the marvels of beautiful Nature and the sweetness of human love are more precious gifts than all the jewels and golden wealth to be found in the world.

The Myths of the Flute and the Pandean Pipes

In the story of Orpheus the myth relating to the origin of the lyre, or harp, was described; and very interesting tales are also told of the discovery of the other two musical instruments of the ancients, the flute and the Pandean pipes.

The earliest simple flute was believed to have been first discovered by Minerva, the goddess of wisdom. Wandering one day upon the bank of a stream, the lovely goddess happened to pluck up a long straight reed from the marshy earth beside her; and as she continued her walk, she held the reed between her lips and carelessly whistled through its hollow tube. To her amazement and delight, she discovered that this whistling of her breath through the reed caused a very pleasant sound; and exercising her natural powers of invention, by the addition of a few notches in the hollow tube she was soon able to make sweet music, and even to play tunes.

This reed, therefore, was the first wind musical instrument ever made; and Minerva was so pleased with her accidental invention that, for a short period, it became her greatest joy and entertainment to wander out into the woods and make music upon her new treasure, which she gradually improved and became a skilful performer upon.

Then, during one of her rambles abroad, Minerva happened to behold her own reflection in a stream, as she sat piping on the bank above; and, to her dismay, she saw that the action of blowing through the reed caused her cheeks to bulge beyond their usual limits in a most unbecoming manner, so that her beauty, for the time being, was spoiled. Now filled with anger that her lovely face should ever, even for a moment, have taken on an ugly look, the horrified goddess flung the reed away from her in disgust; and because the innocent instrument had thus offended her, she laid a curse upon it, declaring that whoever should pick up the fallen reed should suffer pain and sorrow and come to a woeful end.

Nor did the curse prove an idle one; for in due time the prophecy came true.

It happened that, shortly after Minerva had returned to Olympus, a satyr named Marsyas came walking along beside the stream in which the fair goddess had beheld her temporarily-unpleasing reflection; and observing the discarded reed lying upon the ground, he picked it up, and, by blowing through its hollow tube, discovered that he also could make sweet sounds.

Delighted with the treasure he had found, Marsyas returned to his woodland haunts, and now spent all his days in perfecting the pipe, or flute as it was afterwards called; and he learned to play delightful music upon it. So skilful did he become, in fact, that at length he was so daring as to challenge the glorious Apollo to a contest, since he believed his newly-discovered pipe to be a finer musical instrument than the sun-god's famous lyre.

Apollo, who until now had been regarded as the king of music, was by no means pleased to learn that another musical instrument had been discovered which might prove a rival to his own precious harp; and he only agreed to enter into a competition with the presumptuous satyr on condition that the Muses—the nine goddesses of poetry and the sister arts—were the judges, and that, should he himself prove to be the winner, he should be at liberty to do exactly as he pleased with his defeated rival.

So proud was Marsyas of his new pipe and so certain of his powers to produce a better musical effect with it than the sun-god could produce by means of the lyre, that he very foolishly agreed to the dangerous conditions laid down by Apollo; and the two competitors therefore repaired to Mount Parnassus, the chief home of the Muses, and requested the nine fair goddesses to act as judges between them.

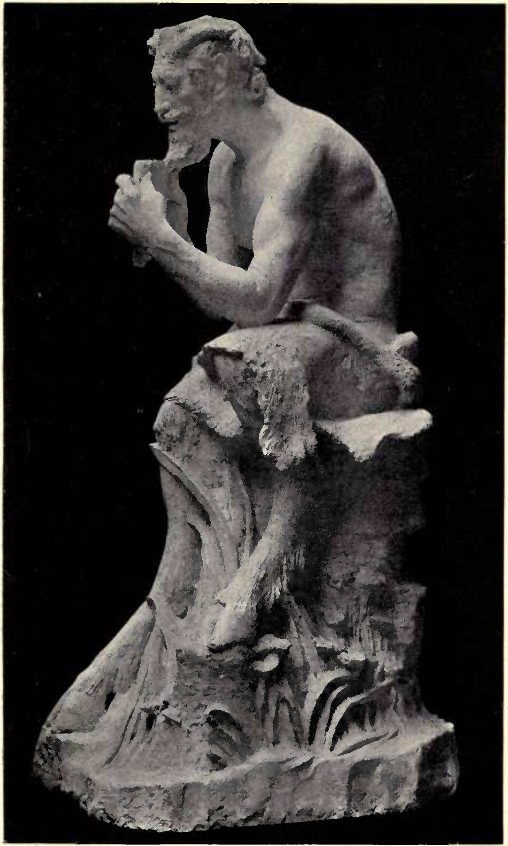
The Muses had the greatest admiration for the glorious sun-god, whom they had always held in the highest favour; and they were, consequently, very desirous of awarding him the palm of victory in this contest. But the sweet music made by the clear and lovely notes which issued from the satyr's pipe—an instrument which they now heard in wonder and surprise for the first time—filled them with undisguised delight, so that they realized, most unwillingly, that this new reed instrument had even a greater charm than the already well-known lyre; and since they were desirous of exercising justice in the matter, it is quite possible that, in spite of their admiration for the sun-god, they would have declared Marsyas the victor in the contest, had not Apollo, seeing that they were about to decide against him, suddenly commenced to sing to the accompaniment of his harp. The gloriously-rich voice of the sun-god held the Muses entranced; and the nine goddesses now declared that the natural voice and the harp together still made the most beautiful music in the world, and thus announced that Apollo was the victor in the contest.

The curse of Minerva, therefore, fell upon the unfortunate Marsyas; for Apollo remorselessly followed out the conditions agreed upon, and, as a punishment for having presumed to rival the powers of a god, he first of all flayed the satyr alive and then transformed him into a river.

Yet in spite of the fact that Minerva had rejected it, and that Marsyas had come to a woeful end through its defence, the humble pipe was not allowed to fall into neglect or obscurity; for many other musicians showed themselves in favour of it, and later on, when it was improved upon, and had become better known as the flute, it grew to be a favourite musical instrument, beloved by all lovers of sweet sounds.

After a number of years had gone by, several tubes or pipes were put together to form a more elaborate instrument; and another very interesting tale used to be told about the origin of this instrument, which was said to have been invented by Pan, the chief god of shepherds and flocks.

Pan was the son of Mercury, and had the ugly form of a satyr—that is, a being having the upper part of his body in the shape of a man, but with the ears, limbs, hoofs, and tail of a goat; and he is usually pictured with a goatskin flung across his shoulders, and carrying a shepherd's crook. Like all other satyrs—of whom he was the king—he was very wild, rude, and boisterous in his conduct; and it was one of his chief delights to terrify people by appearing suddenly in their midst, or by uttering unearthly shrieks when they least expected such a disturbance. So frightened were his victims by these sudden appearances and unexpected noises that they would often completely lose their heads, and fly away in all directions;



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PAN

From the sculpture by Henry A. Pegram, A.R.A.

and this kind of terror became known as "panic fear", and is an expression still used to describe a state of unreasoning, sudden fright.

In spite of this disagreeable characteristic, however, Pan was greatly beloved by the shepherds and country folk, who worshipped him as the protector of their flocks, although they knew him to be full of mischief and to delight in playing tricks upon them.

Besides the mischievous delight he took in giving unwary people bad frights, Pan also dearly loved music; and it was whilst he was carrying out one of his merry tricks of "panic fright" that he accidentally discovered a wonderful new musical instrument.

As the jolly god of the shepherds sat on a hillside one day, guarding some flocks, he noticed a water nymph sporting on the bank of the river below; and so dainty and fresh did the pretty sprite appear that she completely charmed the satyr king, who promptly determined to secure her as a prize for himself. He therefore ran down the hillside, and suddenly appeared beside his charmer, uttering a loud and wild shout; and so terrified at his unexpected appearance was the pretty nymph—whose name was Syrinx—that she fled away at once in an undoubted "panic fear". So frightened, indeed, was she, that she had not even the presence of mind to jump into the water, which was her natural element, but ran like a coursed hare along the bank of the stream, so that Pan, giving instant chase, soon began to gain upon her, and, in a few moments, would have caught her in his long, hairy arms.

Then Syrinx, fearful of falling into the clutches of the satyr king, called wildly upon her sister nymphs to save her; and the water sprites, not having time to drag her into the stream, did the next best thing they could by magically transforming her into a bunch of reeds just as her pursuer was about to seize her.

When Pan found that, instead of the pretty Syrinx, he held but a bunch of broken reeds in his eager grasp, he was so angry and disappointed that he rushed madly up and down the river bank in a mighty rage; and as he ran, strange to say, the soft breezes began to blow lightly through the hollow tubes of the reeds in his hand, so that they gave forth sweet musical sounds of different tones.

Immediately the shepherd god's anger vanished; and forgetting all about his loss of the pretty nymph, he began to wave the broken reeds in the whistling wind, and found that each different length of tube made a different sound. This gave him a happy idea for the invention of a musical instrument; and by carefully cutting a number of reeds into various lengths, and joining these together with a binding of wax, he was able to make a set of wonderfully-tuneful pipes with which, in a very short time, he was able to produce most beautiful music.

So delighted was Pan with his new instrument that he sat on the hillside and played all day long upon it; and he named it the " syrinx ", in memory of the dainty nymph who had been the means of his inventing it, though, later on, it became better known as the " Pandean pipes ".

The shepherds and country folk were equally delighted with the sweet music produced by means of the syrinx; and they would come and sit around Pan in a circle, enjoying and admiring his performance, and declaring that his new instrument was a much finer one than Apollo's lyre.

Pan himself was of this opinion; and, after a while, he determined to challange the sun-god to another contest in his favourite art of music. So, after he had perfected his performance upon the syrinx, the satyr-king went boldly to Apollo and challenged him; and the sun-god again agreed to enter into competition with a musical rival, and suggested, as before, that the Muses should act as judges. Pan, however, would not agree to this, since he remembered the fate of the unfortunate Marsyas and the fact that the Muses always favoured their beloved Apollo; and at length he persuaded the sun-god to agree to abide by the decision of a judge having but little knowledge of music, who would thus be more likely to make the award fairly, since he would naturally declare in favour of the music that pleased him best.

Apollo, still believing his own instrument to be the better of the two, agreed to this; and finally Midas, King of Phrygia, was chosen to act as judge in the contest.

Now Midas was very anxious to be a fair and careful judge, and therefore made the competitors play before him many times; and it must have been a strange and wonderful scene as the contest took place—Apollo, the sun-god, in his bright beauty; Pan, the satyr, with his ugly and wild looks, and the gorgeous King sitting as judge between them.

At length the competition came to an end; and as the two competitors eagerly awaited the decision of their judge, Midas said: "The lyre maketh sweet music; but the pipes make sweeter music still, and throughout the ages yet to come will hold their own against the instruments with strings."

On hearing this, Pan danced wildly and shrieked with joy because he was thus declared the winner in the contest; but Apollo was exceedingly angry that his beloved lyre had been placed lower than the recently-invented syrinx. Declaring that Midas had no proper knowledge of music and no ear for beautiful sounds, he seized the King by the ears and cried: "Since thou hast but the judgment of an ass, henceforth thou shalt wear the ears of an ass!"

So saying, the angry god, to show his scorn for the judge who had awarded against him, caused a pair of ass's ears to grow upon the head of the unfortunate King; and Midas returned to his palace full of dismay, wishing that he had never accepted the office of judge in the contest, since all he had gained for his trouble was a big pair of ass's ugly long ears.

So ashamed of his altered appearance was King Midas, and so afraid that people would laugh him to scorn for having been declared by the great god Apollo to have the judgment of an ass, that he made up his mind to hide his deformity from the sight of all; and, consequently, he had a cap of a peculiar shape made which completely covered his head and so disguised the fact that he had ass's ears, and since he wore this cap constantly, his secret was well kept for a certain time.

There was one person, however, whom he was obliged to take into his confidence; and this was his barber, who, on coming to cut his hair—which he had allowed to grow very long, but was compelled to have sheared at last—could not be kept in ignorance. King Midas made this servant promise never to reveal to any person the fact that his royal master had ass's ears, threatening him with death should he ever break his word; and the barber agreed faithfully to keep the secret, for which promise he received a valuable gift of gold.

For a very long time the barber never revealed the thing he had promised to keep hidden; but after every fresh visit to the palace to shear his master's locks, the secret weighed more heavily upon him, until at last he felt he could not keep such a strange piece of information to himself any longer, but would certainly die unless he revealed it at once.

Therefore, after one of his visits, he crept out in the dead of night, and making his way to a lonely spot in the palace garden, dug a deep hole in the ground near the bank of a stream; and then, stooping down, he whispered into the hole: "King Midas has ass's ears!"

Having thus relieved his mind of the heavy burden it had carried so long, he filled in the hole again, and returned to his home, feeling much better now that he had repeated the secret once.

But, nevertheless, this was not the end of the matter; for in that particular spot of the palace garden into which the barber had whispered his weighty secret, there were some seeds which, by and by, grew up into a bunch of reeds. Then, as these reeds swayed gently to and fro in the soft breezes that played upon them, they whispered faintly to each other: "King Midas has ass's ears! King Midas has ass's ears!"

Thus did the secret become known to all; and the unfortunate King of Phrygia soon found himself the laughing-stock of the whole world, because he had presumed to judge against the musical powers of the great god Apollo.

And yet the award of Midas was the correct one after all; for as the ages have gone by and musical instruments have gradually developed and many new ones have been invented, it has ever been found that the pipes or wind instruments make the finest music. The stringed instruments which have been developed from the first harp of seven strings, such as the various kinds of violins and the piano, are doubtless very fine, but the most glorious and the noblest of all musical instruments is the organ, developed gradually from the simple shepherds' Pandean pipes.

Therefore, in spite of the fact that Apollo chose to deck him with ass's ears in scorn for his musical judgment, the award of King Midas in the famous contest was the correct one after all.

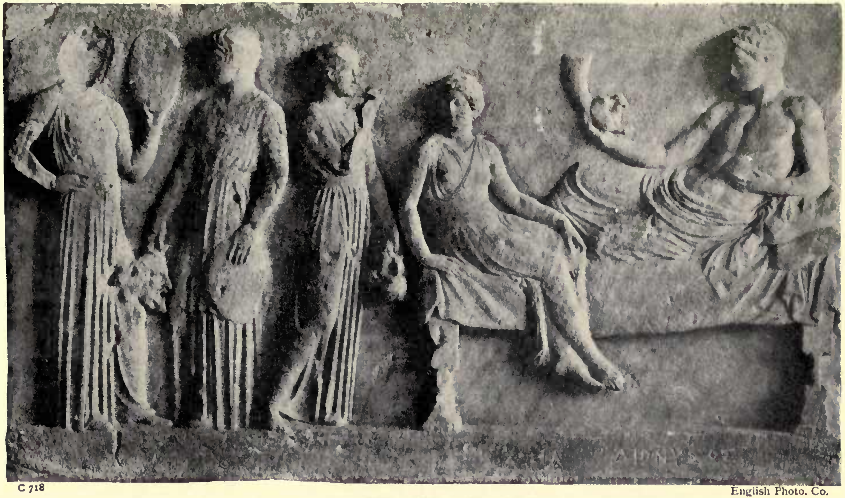
Damon and Pythias

Damon and Pythias were two noble young men of Syracuse, who loved one another so devotedly that they have since been held up to admiration as one of the most perfect examples of true friendship. They trusted one another so implicitly that nobody could ever have persuaded one that the other was faithless, even had such a state of things been the case; and the following story shows how severely their constancy was tried, and proves beyond all doubt what a beautiful thing the love of these two real friends was.

It happened that Pythias had, quite unjustly, been accused of treason against Dionysius, King of Sicily, for which supposed offence he presently found himself in a position of great danger. This Dionysius was a famous tyrant, who, from having been born in humble circumstances, had, by means of his wonderful talents and keen ambition, gained a throne and mighty power for himself; and since, in his early days, he had had to submit to the haughty commands of those above him in station, as soon as he himself attained to a high position, it was his great delight to flaunt his mighty power by behaving in a very tyrannical manner to his unhappy subjects and to all strangers and enemies who were so unfortunate as to fall into his clutches.

Therefore, when Pythias of Syracuse was falsely accused of treason against him, Dionysius condemned him to death; but when the dismayed prisoner entreated first to be permitted to return to his own city in order to settle his domestic affairs before his heavy and unjust sentence was carried out, so many people pleaded his cause and added their entreaties to his that at last the hard-hearted tyrant relented so far as to agree that his request should be granted, on condition, however, that he left behind him a hostage, who should certainly be put to death in his stead should he fail to return within a certain stated period.

At once Pythias thought of his friend Damon, and unhesitatingly sent for him in this hour of



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DIONYSIUS AND ACTORS

From the relief at Piraeus

dire necessity, never thinking for a moment that his trusty companion would fail him. Nor did he; for Damon hastened with all speed to the court of King Dionysius—to the amazement of the latter—and gladly offered to become hostage for his friend, in spite of the dangerous condition attached to his service; and therefore Pythias was permitted to return home to settle his earthly affairs before departing to the Land of the Shades, whilst Damon remained behind as captive to the tyrant in his stead for a certain time.

When Dionysius asked him if he did not feel afraid lest Pythias might take advantage of the opportunity thus afforded him and not return at the end of the allotted time, when he, Damon, would certainly be executed in his stead, the willing prisoner replied instantly with a cheerful smile: "There is no need for me to feel afraid, oh Dionysius, since I have perfect faith in the word of my beloved friend and know that he will certainly return at the appointed time, unless, to be sure, death or captivity overtakes him first. Yet it is in my heart to wish that the noble Pythias might indeed be held a captive somewhere that I might be so blest as to die in his stead!"

Such devotion and perfect faith as this was indeed marvellous in the eyes of the friendless tyrant; yet, though he could not help admiring the true nobility of his captive, he nevertheless determined that he should certainly suffer death should Pythias not return at the appointed time.

And as the Fates would have it, by a strange course of events, many quite unexpected impediments detained Pythias a much-longer time than he had imagined would be the case; and though he never for one single moment intended to evade the sentence of death to which he had been so unjustly committed, and, consequently, to sacrifice his beloved friend, he was at one time in despair, as first one accident and then another kept him from proceeding on his return journey. When finally, after superhuman efforts, he at last succeeded in clearing himself of all the impediments, he rushed with all speed along the remaining few miles of his journey; but his heart was almost bursting with grief and fear lest he might arrive at the palace of the tyrant too late.

Meanwhile, when the last day of the allotted time arrived, Dionysius commanded that the place of execution should be got ready at once, since he was still ruthlessly determined that if one victim escaped him, the other should not; and entering the chamber in which Damon was confined, he began to utter words of sarcastic pity for the latter's "foolish credulity" as he termed the faith which the young man of Syracuse had in his friend.

In reply, however, Damon merely smiled, since, in spite of the fact that the eleventh hour had already arrived, he still believed that his life-long companion would not fail him; and when, a short time later, he was actually led out to execution, his serenity remained the same.

The greatest excitement reigned amongst the crowd assembled to witness the execution, all the people having heard of the compact between the two friends; and, as the captive was at length brought out, expressions of pity and sympathy were heard on all sides mingled with wonder at his composure in such a moment of danger.

But presently the excitement grew more intense still as a swift runner was now seen approaching the palace courtyard at an astonishing speed; and wild shrieks of relief and joy went up as Pythias, breathless and exhausted, rushed pell-mell through the crowd, mounted the scaffold, and flung himself into the arms of his beloved friend, sobbing with relief that he had, by the favour of the gods, arrived in time to save his life.

This final exhibition of devoted love and astonishing faithfulness was more than even the stony heart of Dionysius the tyrant could resist; and as the surrounding spectators melted into tears as the friends embraced, the King approached the pair and, declaring Pythias was now pardoned and his death sentence cancelled, humbly desired to be admitted as a third into their beautiful bond of friendship.

Thus did the two friends of Syracuse, by the faithful love they bore to each other, conquer the hard heart of a tyrant king; and in the annals of true friendship there are no fairer names than those of Damon and Pythias—for no man can do more than be willing to lay down his life for the sake of his friend.[1]

The Sword of Damocles

Dionysius, King of Sicily, a ruler famous for the harsh treatment he meted out to his subjects and others unfortunate enough to fall into his power, went in daily fear of his life; for since he held his mighty power by inspiring terror, he was well hated, and many would have slain him gladly had an opportunity presented itself.

Dionysius, however, was well aware of this fact, and securely guarded himself accordingly; but since, besides being of a tyrannical nature he greatly enjoyed intellectual society, he managed to surround himself with a very brilliant court of men famed for their skill in science, letters, and the arts in general—though many of the courtiers held their offices in fear and trembling.

Like all tyrants also, Dionysius had a great number of flatterers, who sought to gain favour with him by means of their constant adulation of his undoubted talents; and the most celebrated of these foolish folk was Damocles, a courtier who was for ever lauding the happiness and divine gifts of kings in general and of Dionysius in particular.

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[1] It is now believed that the name Pythias is a misnomer, and that the faithful friend of Damon was one named Phintias; but as the story has become so well known under the title of "Damon and Pythias", I have retained the latter name, though erroneous, for this short account.

"How glorious it must be to live the life of a king, and to be so marvellous and mighty a wise monarch as our admirable Dionysius!" he would frequently exclaim within hearing of his master. "Surely there can be no greater happiness in the world than to sit upon the throne of Sicily."

Had Dionysius been a weak and vain king, he might have been pleased with such fulsome flattery; but, fortunately for his own ambitions, he was not to be deceived by abject fawning of this kind. Being also possessed of a sense of humour—though of a somewhat grim kind—and having become thoroughly sickened with the continual flatteries of Damocles, he resolved at last to amuse himself at his expense, and at the same time to teach his foolish courtier a wise lesson he would never be likely to forget.

He therefore said to the obsequious Damocles one day: "Since thou art so constantly singing the delights of sitting upon a throne, I will give thee a taste of that happiness thou laudest so greatly. To-morrow I give a banquet to a fine company of princes and lords who are my vassals; and thou shalt sit upon the throne in my stead throughout the feast and experience for thyself the delights of being a king. Methinks at the end of the entertainment thou wilt be well content to resign thy seat and become a plain subject once more."

But Damocles declared more fulsomely than ever that this would not be the case, and that, on the contrary, he would be grief-stricken on leaving the throne at the end of the feast; and he awaited the morrow in the greatest of excitement, vainly boasting to his companions of the wonderful honour the King was about to bestow upon him by thus permitting him to occupy his throne for a few hours.

When the time of the banquet arrived next day, and the highborn guests had all assembled, Damocles, clothed in royal robes, was bidden by the King to ascend the throne; and a golden crown was then placed upon his head, whilst all the guests were commanded to render him the same honour and deference as they would have done to Dionysius himself.

Although the heaviness of the crown soon made his head ache, and it was somewhat irritating to have to await the tasting of every dish offered to him by the royal tasters, for fear it might be poisoned, Damocles at first greatly enjoyed his unusual position, and found the deference and flattering words of his servile companions extremely pleasant; and then, quite suddenly, he received a most terrible shock, and would instantly have vacated his seat of honour with gladness had not Dionysius sternly bade him to remain where he was.

As, in his vanity, he tossed his head high, and tilted his nose in the pride of the moment, the temporary king presently beheld, to his horror, a keen-edged naked sword suspended from the roof by a single hair exactly over his own head; and realizing that if the slender hair broke—as it seemed very likely to do—he would be instantly killed, and filled with terror at the thought, he entreated the tyrant to permit him to take a lower seat at the board.

"Not so," said Dionysius, with a cruel smile, and greatly enjoying the discomfiture of the flatterer. "It is true that the naked sword suspended above thee may fall at any moment; but, on the other hand, it may not. Nevertheless, I intend thee to sit throughout this banquet in that same utmost danger, with death hanging over thy head thus, that thou mayest learn how foolish it is to sing of the happiness of kings and others placed in high positions who, in truth, go in constant fear of their lives, and never know, in spite of their seeming glory, when evil will befall them. Brave of heart and greatly to be admired of men are those who can smile and appear happy and at ease under such circumstances. Therefore, I prithee, chat carelessly and smile, good Damocles, and let me see if thou hast a brave heart."

But the now-wretched Damocles was a coward at heart; and so paralysed with fear was he that he could not eat another morsel of food, and did nothing but gaze upwards at the naked sword hanging above him by its slender thread, every moment expecting it to fall upon him.

In vain he called upon the tyrant to release him from his terrible position; for Dionysius sternly refused his request each time, and commanded the guards to prevent his victim from moving, that he might suffer to the full the pangs of abject terror, as a punishment for his foolish talk.

At length, however, after several hours had gone by, the banquet came to an end; and then, since the naked sword had never fallen after all, Damocles was commanded to remove his temporary crown and robes of office, and to come down from the throne once more.

Damocles needed no second bidding, but gladly returned to the humbler paths of security, having learnt well the wise lesson that boundless wealth does not necessarily bring happiness and satisfaction, since, though a high position has its honour and glory, it also has its dangers, and that he who would gain mighty power and greatness must be strong and of a good courage, caring naught for the vain words of foolish flatterers.

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